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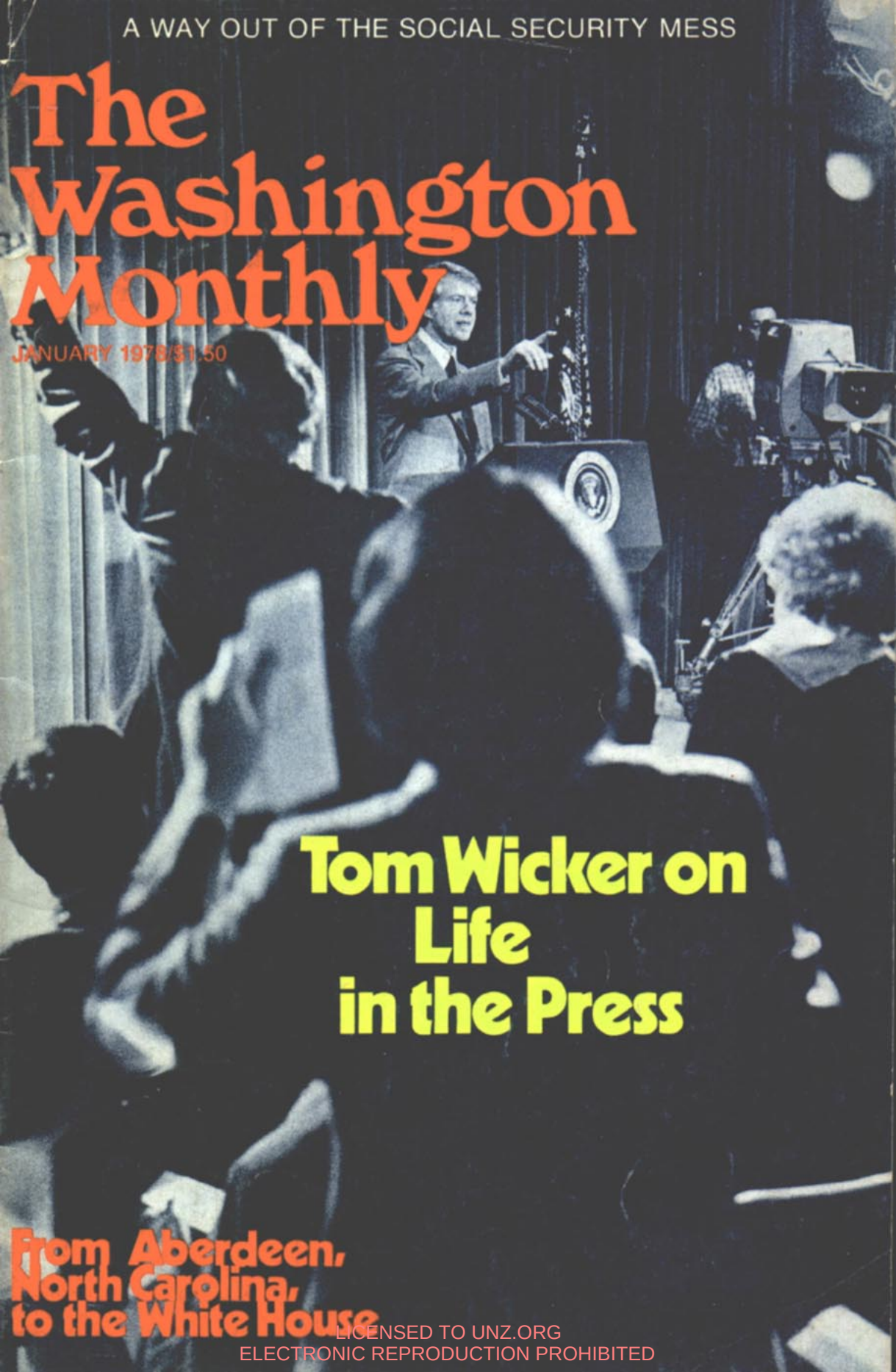

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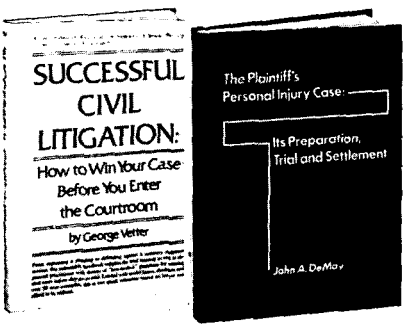

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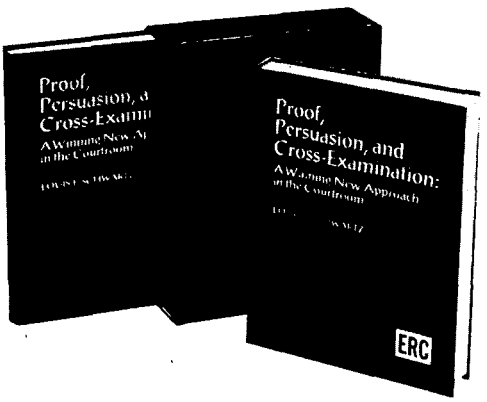

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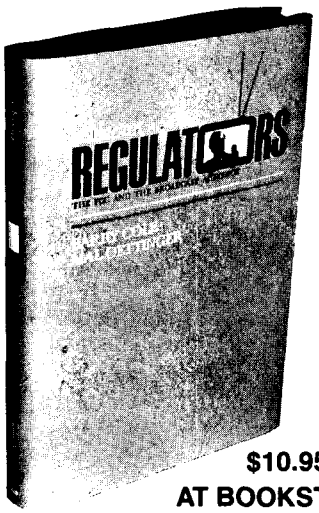

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VOLUME NINE NUMBER ELEVEN
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TILTING AT WINDMILLS 5

News-Management from the Small Town to the White House
by Tom Wicker
A life in the press. 8

TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES 27

The Trouble With Tenure
by Mark Nadel
Our universities give full professors the right to do nothing, and their junior colleagues no rights at all. 28

Antisocial Security
by Nicholas Lemann
Our present system of old age support plays to our selfishness instead of our generosity, and that has caused it a host of problems. 38

Bureaucracy: The Biggest Crisis of All
by Michael Nelson
To the people outside Washington, Washington is America's main problem. 50

RICHARD REEVES ON POLITICAL BOOKS 61

POLITICAL BOOKNOTES 63

LETTERS 4
WHO'S WHO 46
POLITICAL PUZZLE 60
WHERE TO STAY IN WASHINGTON 36
MEMO OF THE MONTH 49

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Letters

I served as a legislative Assistant to Senator Eagleton for four years until I left his office last February to take a better position. I assume I was kept on the staff, in part, because we were successful in improving public policy irrespective of approval or disapproval of the other Senators. My experience does not support the contention of your article, which implies that Senator Eagleton would compromise the public good in an effort not to offend his colleagues.

In numerous major floor and committee fights, spanning a two-year period, Senator Eagleton led the effort to cut off military aid to Turkey after Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974. This effort was in direct opposition to the desires of the majority leader of the Senate, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and many of the most powerful people in Congress.

Senator Eagleton even took the fight to the congressional committee that least challenges its chairmen—the Appropriations Committee. He opposed and defeated the chairman on this issue.

Senator Eagleton is not a person who would forego an opportunity to correct an injustice in the hope of advancing himself within the Senate. Contrary to popular belief, the level of integrity in the Congress is quite high.

ANDREW E. MANATOS
Washington, D.C.

Just as prisons are full of innocent men, I don't suppose there was ever an employee fired for good cause—to hear the employee tell it. But there is usually another side to these issues and had you inquired you might have paused before publishing Mr. Gregory Rushford's self-serving rationalization on "Why Senator Eagleton Fired Me" [December].

The fact is I fired Mr. Rushford because he failed to perform the duties he was assigned and because he was unable to get along with fellow workers. Mr. Rushford claims to have been working on an expose of corruption in the Food for Peace program. That's the same claim he repeatedly made in my office when asked how he was progressing with his assignment. But, aside from dredging up the already-investigated charge of food rotting on docks, Mr. Rushford produced nothing to justify his unshakable belief that somewhere there was bound to be corruption in the program.

Mr. Rushford's allegation that I asked him to investigate Senator Percy is pure, unadultered fiction. I can only guess that in light of my critical statement about Senator Percy during the Lance hearing, Mr. Rushford felt such a juicy morsel would help him market his latest expose. It is simply not true.

Mr. Rushford also is wrong in suggesting there is no future in government for honest hard-hitting investigators. It is just that there is no place for sensation-seekers who allow suspicion to serve in place of fact.

THOMAS F. EAGLETON
Washington, D.C.

Thomas Eagleton is the senior senator from Missouri.

The author replies:

Generally, I stand by my story. Specifically, I'd like to refute what Senator Eagleton says about the matter of Senator Percy.

Eagleton's request that I investigate campaign contributions is usually referred to as "negative campaign research"—it's the perfectly legitimate perusal of press clips and other public documents. Eagleton called me into his office in the first weeks of my employment and said a friend of his, a southern Illinois state legislator who wanted to run against Percy in 1978, had called to ask him for help in tracking down a rumor that Gulf Oil lobbyist Claude Wild had illegally contributed to Percy's last campaign.

Eagleton told me to do nothing illegal, to be discreet. Above all, he said, "don't do anything that could be traced back to me. Chuck Percy would come to me on the floor and say to me [and here he exaggerated his voice to mimic Percy's mellifluous tones] 'My God, Tom, what has gotten into you?' " Eagleton indicated no animosity toward Percy, and seemed embarrassed when I told him that, when I had come to Washington in 1967 as a student and a Republican, Percy had given me my first job. He never brought up the matter again.

This is a small matter—small to me, and small in my story—but Senator Eagleton has made it important by lying about it. I tried very hard in my story to be fair to him—I repeatedly praised his talents, his accomplishments in the Senate, and his personal qualities. It's too bad my attempts at balance have met with such a hostile reception.

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Tilting at Windmills

During the National Women's Conference in Houston, Bella Abzug was quoted as looking forward to the day when women have equality and "men will have to compete a little harder." This reminded me of what has been my greatest disappointment with the women's movement. Instead of making men more feminine, it has made women more masculine. I didn't want men to be feminine in the sense of dainty or petite. I wanted them to become gentler, kinder, less macho. What I had liked most about the unliberated woman was that, not having to compete with men, she could look on the male's aggressions and career anxieties with sanity and good humor. Now she's competing, and seems to be adopting the male's worst traits. Instead of changing the system, she's joining up. This is tragic because the very things we need the most these days are the feminine values of non-violence and peace. We need women's love and laughter to recall us to humanity.

One profession I had especially hoped women would change is the law. They have been entering it in record numbers during the seventies, but the adversary system, with its emphasis on competition and winning, remains unchanged. The old female values could have brought a badly needed shift toward more harmonious ways of resolving disputes that would emphasize mediation and bringing people together.

None of the foregoing should be construed to suggest that I am against women's right to work. I support that right totally, including the right to perform in combat roles in the armed forces. I know a lot of women who are in much better physical condition than I was when the United States Infantry found me acceptable. And why on earth couldn't women perform just as well as men as fighter pilots? But again one yearns for the old female values. Large numbers of women with those values in the military could be a great insurance policy against My Lais.

Washington is one of the great broken records of all time. No matter what the administration, the leaker is the enemy. The most recent example comes from the Navy, where someone gave some unclassified budget data to *Aviation Week*. The Secretary of the Navy, W. Graham Claytor, immediately launched an investigation. . . . Speaking of the Navy, the revelation that each Trident submarine is going to cost $1.2 billion instead of the $800 million we have been led to expect reminds us to ask again why we are building the monster Tridents —they are longer than the Washington Monument is tall, and cost so much that we can afford only 13 of them. Doesn't it seem likely that it is the

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same old Navy psychology that gave us the giant carriers because big ships produce jobs for admirals? It seems obvious that the best deterrent would be lots of small submarines that would be impossible for the Russians to keep track of. . . . There are headlines that could run any day. One of our favorites is "New Jersey Official Accused of Corruption." Another appeared most recently in the November 3 edition of *The Washington Star*: "Probe of Teamsters Bogged Down—Key Witnesses Refuse to Testify." . . .

According to the Associated Press, the General Accounting Office will publish a report this month saying the Pentagon could save more than a billion dollars annually by using civilians in jobs now performed by members of the military. One example given in the AP story is waiters for the dining hall at the Air Force Academy. Civilians in the area get $3 an hour for such work. Military personnel receive $5.80. One might ask, why have waiters in the first place—it might be cheaper and psychologically healthier to have our future officers stand in line cafeteria-style. In any event, this report could be important if it concentrates on the tremendous waste in using military people for clerical work. Military personnel in such jobs retire after 20 years when they are as young as 37. This means we are obligated to pay them generous pensions for 30 to 40 years thereafter.

With one fourth of all our unemployment concentrated among teenagers and with 40 per cent of black teenagers out of work, employers need an incentive to hire young people. So what does Congress do? It raises the minimum wage to $2.65 next year and to $3.35 by 1981. The AFL-CIO demonstrated its concern for the poor by lobbying hard for the increase. . . . The Carter Administration, having announced its intention to cut down on government advisory committees, has proposed 27 such groups for the new Department of Energy. Our favorite is the Lignite Subcommittee of the Fossil Energy Advisory Committee. . . . As we all know, the will to long life is strong in government agencies. The Indian Claims Commission, founded in 1946, was allowed to receive claims only through 1951. It is finally closing down next year—but it still has over 60 claims that the staff has managed to keep pending for at least 26 years . . . . The paranoia that pervades the upper levels of American life has never been captured better than in "The Godfather." My favorite line comes when Michael Corleone says, "I don't feel I have to kill everyone. Just my enemies." . . . The official estimate of the number of illegal aliens in the Washington area is 4,500. There must be at least ten times that many. Most of the busboys in area restaurants and practically all of the live-in domestic servants speak with a Latin accent. Now that blacks are standing up for their rights, the aliens have become

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the new slave class. Terrified of being exposed and deported, they are quick to assume the humble demeanor the rich like to encourage among the lower orders. . . . Speaking of the rich reminds us of recent evidence that our old friends, the journalists and the liberals, must be doing well. The *Columbia Journalism Review* carries an advertisement for diamond earrings at $1,100 and *The New Republic* has an ad from Tiffany's for a $590 watch. The mean income of *New Republic* readers is $34,700, by the way.

If we had to try to teach bureaucratic psychology in one lesson, this would be it: Having been voted the government's worst agency in a recent survey of congressmen, the Labor Department's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs reacted not with efforts to improve its overall performance, but by establishing special units in each of its offices to handle claims referred by members of Congress. . . . Of the two main reasons why government administrators tend to favor ever larger budgets for their departments, one is well known: a big budget makes its administrator look big. The other is less well known but equally potent: each administrator wants the loyalty of all the administrators under him. If each of their budgets is big, for reason one, he will tend to go along for reason two. . . . Jack Anderson is offering his *Washington Letter* to those who can afford it, at $48 a year. He promises to keep you "a step ahead of the trends—and of your competitors"—and, although he doesn't say so, presumably of the readers of his newspaper column, too. Evans and Novak do the same thing. We wonder how they sort out what to give to their $48 subscribers and what to give their newspaper readers.

William Safire has had two triumphs as a journalist. The first was his story on the tragic death of thousands of Kurds as a result of Henry Kissinger's desertion of them after he had encouraged them to rely on us. The second was the Bert Lance affair. Why did the press make a big thing out of Lance while almost totally ignoring the Kurds? . . If you ever wondered why Katharine Graham made the mistake of going public with the stock of *The Washington Post*—which means that instead of being able to run the paper in the public interest, she is under a legal obligation to run it in the stockholders' interest—Chalmers Roberts says in his new book, *The Washington Post, The First Hundred Years*, that the villain was Frederick (Fritz) Beebe. Beebe, the chairman of the board of The Washington Post Company, persuaded Mrs. Graham in 1971 that the public stock offering should be made. . . . Newsletters are not the only way journalists and publishers have found to make an extra dollar. Another is putting on two-day conferences and seminars on such subjects as "Coming Changes in Tax Policy" and charging businessmen $300 to $500 to attend. The sponsor gets prominent speakers to participate without fee by assuring them that the audience will consist of important people. He gets important people for the audience by assuring them that there will be prominent speakers.

Cigarette advertising has become less objectionable in recent years. The emphasis is now on low tar and nicotine and rational choice (which is why we have brands with names like Fact, True, and Merit). But there are a few companies that continue to try to lure the young into taking up an addictive habit through advertising that makes smoking seem glamorous and attractive. Camel, Marlboro, Salem, Kool, Winston, Newport, and Virginia Slims seem to be the worst. Shouldn't there be some special Dishonor Roll for the tobacco companies and advertising agencies responsible for such ads, and for the newspapers and magazines that publish them?

—*Charles Peters*

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News-Management From the Small Town to the White House

by Tom Wicker

I: The Sandhill Citizen, The Robesonian, and The Winston-Salem Journal.

Monday was "court day" in Moore County, North Carolina, in 1949, and I regularly spent it at the county seat, Carthage, as correspondent for the *Sandhill Citizen*, of Aberdeen, North Carolina (population 1,603). I reserved most of the afternoon for peddling ads—another of my duties—to the Carthage merchants, in keen competition with the county seat weekly, the *Moore County News*. On first arrival at the courthouse in the morning, I checked with the register of deeds, the clerk of court, the sheriff, and other officials for suits newly filed, big property transfers, scandalous foreclosures, heinous crimes, and the like; then I laboriously copied down births, deaths, and marriages of note. Later I hastened to the courtroom where County Judge Leland McKeithen dispensed even-handed justice, or something as close to it as anything I've seen since.

That courtroom was rank with the enduring follies and foibles of mankind. It was segregated still, and in the summer months sweltered in the harsh dry heat of the North Carolina Sandhills in the days before universal air conditioning. But it provided a generous education in human nature, lawyers' tricks, oratory, and the law itself—in roughly that order. I witnessed court actions involving murders, manslaughters, crimes of property too numerous to define, vagrancies, seductions, desertions, auto offenses of every variety, bitterly disputed wills, breaches of promise and peace, recoveries of damage, alienations of affection, assaults, rapes, batteries, break-ins, reckless endangerments, ad infinitum. It seemed natural enough to me in the South of the 1940s that most defendants, and most victims, were black.

One divorce case—that of a white couple—had a particular impact on me, although I scarcely recall its details. They involved one party futilely chasing the other with an ax. The story plaintively related from the witness stand by the complainant, a worn-out woman with a ZaSu Pitts voice, haggard eyes, and hair just beginning to go gray, was the human comedy at its most ribald and perverse—Moore County transported to Chaucer's time and *The Canterbury Tales*. The spectators scattered around the courtroom, the press—another reporter and I—at its privileged table, even occasionally Judge McKeithen, rocked with laughter. The conclusion

Tom Wicker is associate editor of The New York Times. *This article is from his new book,* On Press, *to be published in March by The Viking Press.* *©1978 Tom Wicker.*

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was foregone—divorce granted, with a fine crack of the gavel.

That was Monday. That afternoon, I hawked the *Citizen*'s ad space, probably to no better effect than usual. The next day, armed with copious notes, I turned out a humorous account of the divorce case for my long lead over the agate type that summed up the other court cases ("Lonzo McNair, Star Route, Carthage, failure to observe stop sign, costs of court"; "A.C. Overby, Vermont Avenue, Southern Pines, aggravated assault, continued to Superior Court") and sent it back to the *Citizen*'s ever-clacking linotype machine (in a small shop in the days before offset printing, it was mandatory to keep "the machine" running, both to make the thing pay and to keep the lead pot from "freezing").

Eyes Blazing

On Thursday, putting on my editor's hat, I wrote a two-column head for my court story and scheduled it for page one, above the fold—top play in the *Citizen*, as in any other newspaper. We went to press routinely that night, got the mail copies to the post office in the nick of time, and went off for a few late beers.

Working late justified sleeping late; and when I dragged myself into the *Citizen* office about noon the next day, I had a visitor—a worn-out looking woman with a ZaSu Pitts voice, but whose once-haggard eyes were blazing, whose fluttering hands were clenched into fists, and whose graying hair—I suddenly saw at range closer than that of the witness stand—was that of a woman not too many years older than I, who not too long before probably had been considered a peach by the boys in her high-school class.

"Mr. Wicker," she said without preamble, "why did you think you had the right to make fun out of me in your paper?"

I have never forgotten that question—and I still can't answer it. In 1949 I doubt if I even tried. I remember thinking I had not bargained for such awful moments when I had landed my first reporter's job a few months before. Accurate though my story had been, and based on a public record, it had nevertheless exploited human unhappiness for the amusement or titillation of others. I had made the woman in my office something less than what she was—a human being possessed, despite her misfortunes, of real dignity.

Seeing that, I saw too that I had not only done her an injury but missed the story I should have written. This is one of the besetting sins of journalism—sensationalism at the expense of the dignity and truth of the common human experience. I have been fortunate to have worked mostly for publishers and editors who sought to avoid that sin—not always successfully. And reading some of the more lurid journals, I've often thought that sensationalism and gossip columns tend to be techniques employed mostly by big-circulation publications for an anonymous audience. Not many editors and reporters would be callous or unseeing enough to engage in them if they had to face the victims the next morning over a battered desk in an office not much bigger than a closet.

Close at Hand

On the other hand, in small cities and towns, where the overwhelming majority of American newspapers are published, circulating to millions more readers than *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* ever reach, newspaper publishers and editors have difficulty looking at their communities objectively and serving them dispassionately. Like the woman in my office, the readers are close at hand; many of them are bankers, industrialists, heavy advertisers, country club members, and golfing partners with those who own and manage the newspaper.

It's hard to be independent, much

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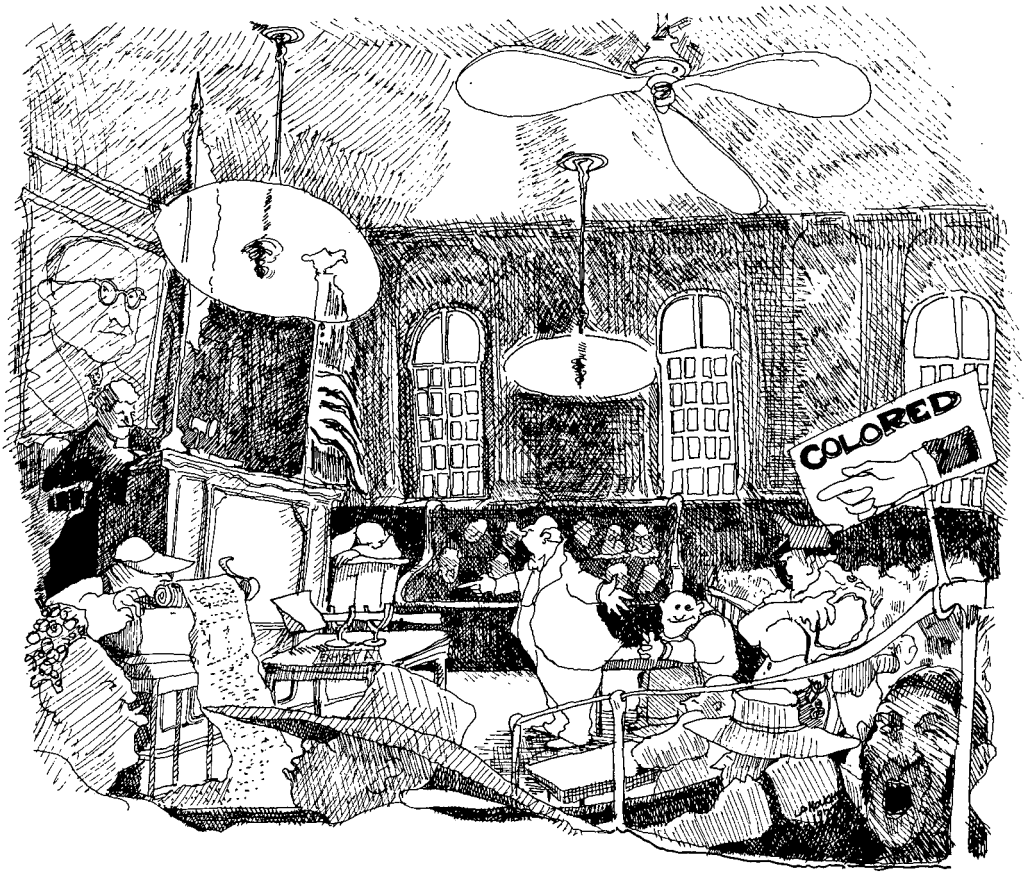

less "crusading," in such circumstances. Commercial boosterism is more often the rule, especially since publishers usually have a heavy economic stake in their communities. They also tend to be part of, or at least cooperative with, the community power structure; and they are seldom controversial and almost never adversarial about important community institutions. This doesn't necessarily mean that respectable and useful newspapers can't be published in small cities and towns; but they are often limited in their scope and ambitions. My career in provincial journalism—from 1949 to 1960—soon impressed on me the rudiments of what became my First Law of Journalism, that a newspaper inevitably reflects the character of its community.

The *Sandhill Citizen* was the single-handed creation of H. Clifton Blue, an unlettered but shrewd Tarheel who began publishing it as *The Captain* in 1932 on a foot-powered press that could print only two letter-sized pages at a time. Clif Blue himself supplied the foot power. His first base was the town of Vass, North Carolina.

When a competitor folded elsewhere in Moore County, Clifton Blue took over its name—the *Sandhill Citizen*—and second-class mailing permit; *The Captain* had never had such a permit, for the good reason that its publisher had never had the $100 application fee.

In 1936 Blue moved the *Citizen* down the road to Aberdeen, which not only boasted U.S. Highway One but two railroads—what was then the Seaboard Air Line, and the Aberdeen & Rockfish, a feeder road to nearby Fort Bragg—and therefore, in the late thirties, a success story just about to happen. So, in a more modest way, was the *Sandhill Citizen.* By the time I came along in 1949 the *Citizen* was one of three more or less prospering weeklies in Moore County, not counting the *Outlook,* which catered

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to rich Yankees wintering in Pinehurst.

I was not long out of the University of North Carolina with an A.B. in journalism. My home town was near Aberdeen, my father worked for the familiar Seaboard Air Line, and I was willing to work cheap and counted myself worth every cent Clif Blue could pay me, if not much more. For $37.50 a week, I could even call myself editor.

A Splendid Smell

The *Citizen* was quartered in a one-story cinder-block building on a street connecting U.S. One with Aberdeen's downtown business section. There was a business office up front, presided over by a young woman of post-high-school age, who took subscriptions, classifieds, and "personals" over the counter or from the phone, kept the books, and sent out the bills. There was a littered editorial office that I took over from Clif Blue, and the shop was out back—one linotype, one flatbed press, two job presses, one Omaha folder, a mail labeling device that sometimes worked, and a splendid smell of ink and hot lead.

Other than engaging in mildly lascivious repartee with the counter girl—tame stuff by today's standards—my job was mainly to sell ads to anyone who'd buy, at 40 cents per column inch, $60 the full page. I designed the typographical layout for these ads, usually wrote the copy, and laid out each page, more or less. On Thursday nights, when the *Citizen* went to press, I ran the Omaha folder—a neat trick, flipping square sheets of newsprint crackling with static electricity precisely into the thing's snapping jaws, so that four pages, printed on each side, could be mechanically folded and cut into an eight-page newspaper.

Actually, my lowest priority was to collect and "write-up" such news as there was—the discovery, for instance of the first beaver dam in anybody's memory on a local creek. The very first news story I ever wrote to earn a living seemed to me to be right out of Ben Hecht. A quarter of a century later, my lead is graven on my memory: "The long arm of the Federal Bureau of Investigation reached down into Pine Bluff last Tuesday to arrest a long-sought bank robber hiding out in a tourist court."

I also wrote editorials, but on Clif Blue's instructions they were mostly about the virtues of cornbread and pot likker, or the pleasing record of the local girls' basketball team. I did attack a pothole on a downtown street once, but after that Clif took to calling Preston Blue (a distant relation of Clif's, as all Blues in that area were), on Thursday night to ask, "Did Tom write anything controversial this week?" This hardly encouraged me to view the press as a watchdog of liberty and justice.

Nor was I long in perceiving that once a month, without any solicitation, a full-page ad arrived in the mail from the headquarters of Robbins Mills. This textile giant not only had a vast new plant on the outskirts of Aberdeen (beyond city taxes) but also one in a neighboring community that had been known as Hemp—until the city fathers gratefully changed its name to Robbins. The ads extolled free enterprise and the right to work, but so far as I ever saw, the *Citizen* did not have to run "puff" copy to qualify for this monthly windfall. On the other hand, I never noticed criticism of Robbins Mills creeping into our columns, either.

Avuncular Denials

By the time of my encounter with the outraged divorcee, I was not a complete stranger to controversy. A local doctor, Robert F. Mobbs, had volunteered to me that the small Taylor Chemical Company plant (also just outside the town limits) was producing a fallout of dust that was dangerous to workers and families living nearby. I had no real sense, in

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1949, of the volatility and importance of the environmental and industrial safety issues, and I incautiously reported Dr. Mobb's charges, along with the avuncular denials of the plant management. But I was too inexperienced to know how to follow up, or even that I should. Besides, I left Aberdeen for greener pastures soon after my story appeared.

Dr. Mobbs, it later developed, had hit upon one of the first indications that DDT and other insecticides might be harmful to human beings. His interest had been piqued by the death from unexplained convulsions of a three-year-old Aberdeen girl; and it occurred to him that material in the air from the Taylor plant might have been in some way involved.

On investigation, he learned that Taylor was mixing DDT, sulphur, and lindane into a crop-dusting compound; to protect workers who were bagging this mixture, the dust from it was blown by a large fan out of the plant—and allowed to go freely into the atmosphere. As early as December 1948 Dr. Mobbs had published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* an account of how he had subjected rabbits to lindane dust and they had died—showing evidence of tissue change similar to that found in the dead child.

For the next 20 years, Robert Mobbs was one of a small band of American crusaders against insecticides like DDT; he appeared frequently before congressional and scientific committees and government agencies, mostly to no avail. In Aberdeen, as a consequence, he soon got a reputation as something of a zealot, a man who rocked the boat and who had given the town and one of its industries a bad name. Feeling "ostracized," in 1954 he moved back to his native Massachusetts, where he now practices in Wilmington—and where on June 14, 1972, he got the news that the federal government finally had banned DDT.

Dr. Mobb's charges against Taylor

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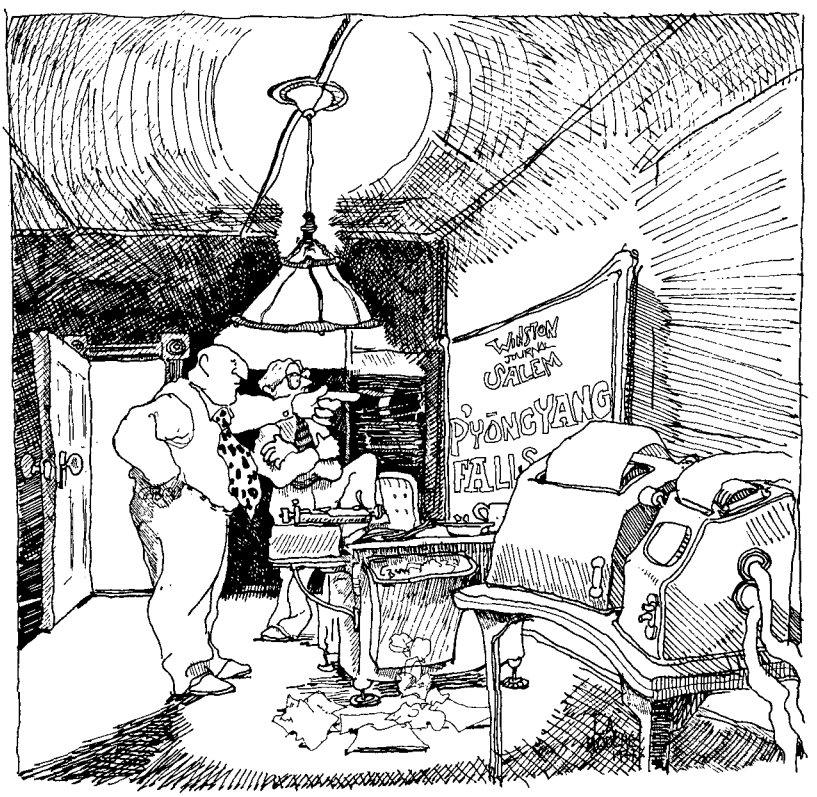
Chemical was my first encounter with a so-called "whistle-blower"—one who speaks out against fraud or deception or graft or hazard that might not otherwise be detected. And his treatment in Aberdeen illustrates as well as anything the frequent necessity for whistle-blowers to hide their identities—to become "anonymous sources" protected by a reporter from the vengeance of their superiors or neighbors or competitors or peers.

Afghanistanism

Close proximity to his or her readers can sometimes impose a degree of humility on young reporters—not easy, when youth has a forum. After my apprenticeship on the *Sandhill Citizen*, for example, I moved about 50 miles east to become a general reporter, later the telegraph editor, of the afternoon daily *Robesonian* (circulation about 7,000), published in Lumberton, Robeson County, North Carolina.

The use in local papers of extensive wire-service copy on state, national, and world stories is a widespread custom irreverently known to newspapermen as "Afghanistanism" (who can check up on or take offense from news of Afghanistan?) We were expert practitioners at *The Robesonian*, but in my tenure as telegraph editor, I at least tried to bear down heavily on North Carolina news—especially as I conceived us to be in "competition" primarily with the state capital daily, the *News and Observer*.

By 1951 I was working as a copy editor and weekend telegraph editor in what I thought of as the Big Time—the *Winston-Salem* (North Carolina) *Journal* (circulation about 75,000). With time out for Korean War service, I worked for the *Journal* through most of the fifties, taking a turn as sports editor, another as Sunday features editor, a year as Washington correspondent, covering city hall for a while, then writing editorials—a copious education in



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journalism during which I may have learned something about life.

I worked at night for the morning *Journal*—going in for duty at 5:00 p.m., eating "lunch" about 11:00 p.m., getting off at 2:00 a.m. or later. Especially in a small city, this kind of off-hours routine can be exhilarating. I slept late when everyone else was struggling out of bed to punch the time clock; I saw my movies and did my reading in the afternoon; I went to work just as good householders were coming home; and when I got off in the small hours, the empty city belonged to me and my few colleagues of the late trick. With our wives, we thought nothing of beginning a bridge game at 3:00 a.m. and playing until the sun was well up; without wives, we shoveled a lot of money (for us) around the poker table.

The Tough Crust

We knew the all-night barbecue joints and the best places for breakfast; we regularly dropped by the hospital emergency room and the police station to chat with the few other night people. We never had any trouble finding bottled spirits, even with the legal purveyors home asleep; and we dropped much cash on the football parlay sheets to the Greek Boy, our local oddsmaker, a man who avoided the sun as a cat does water. We owned our special nighttime world, and disdained all others; and I have never again felt so set apart from workaday mortals or so dominant in my own environment.

I also picked up in Winston-Salem something of the newspaperman's tough crust, under which it's possible —sometimes, anyway—to find shelter from the assaults of the life around you. Violence, crime, accidents, acts of God, death, corruption, fate—all these are the stock in trade of the newsroom (no news in good news and vice versa), and I have known few newspaper people who didn't develop either calloused attitudes or a sort of protective armor. All the world's grief channels itself toward the newsroom, and no one can hope to cope without some kind of emotional shield. I threw up the first time I saw the blood flowing around a knife handle sticking out of a man's stomach, but never again.

The Power Structure

Those were mostly good years, full of variety and growth. For a while, as Sunday feature editor, I also was book editor, fleecing gullible New York publishers for innumerable volumes to which the *Journal* could give but cursory review. I wrote a book column for the Sunday paper and thought it raised the tone of things; but when we had a professional readership survey, my column's score was something like 1.3. "News Notes from Upper Yadkin" had more readers, and that only appeared in the mail edition.

I was then considerably more interested in books than in politics or public affairs, and I still am. But when I came back to Winston-Salem after a brief stint as Washington correspondent and was assigned the *Journal*'s best beat—city hall—in 1959, I jumped at the chance, particularly because it was a city election year. Mayor Marshall Kurfees, a colorful character who had surprised the city by winning election several terms back, then surprised it further by being a pretty good mayor, supposedly had been told that he was not to run again by the power structure—which, in the home city of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Hanes Hosiery, the Wachovia Bank and Goody's Headache Powder, was some structure. The mayor acquiesced tamely enough, some said owing to promises from on high. It was my job that spring to cover the power structure's search for a new mayor, suitably pliable to work with. Marshall Kurfees, rumor had it, had got a little too big for his political britches.

But no new candidate—only a lot of possibles—emerged. And for the first time in my youthful career, I

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suffered a shattering "beat" by a rival. Gene Whitman, the city hall man for the hated *Twin City Sentinel*, our afternoon paper, scooped me by a mile on the sensational story that Marshall Kurfees would run again after all. Biding his time like any good pro, the mayor had waited for the right moment to preempt the field—which was exactly what Whitman, an old hand at the game, had expected him to do. What's more, Whitman had had the foresight to get a pledge from Kurfees that if he *did* run, he'd break the story in the *Sentinel*. I kicked myself for weeks, because if I'd thought there was even a possibility that Kurfees would run again, I could have offered him more circulation for an exclusive in the morning *Journal*. Moral: in writing about politics, the *possibilities* matter as much as the supposedly known facts, which often are not facts at all. (Using the inspired slogan, "Put the Jam on the Lower Shelf where the Little Man Can Reach It," Kurfees won another term.)

Bill Hoyt, a wise and gentle man with a good business brain, was the publisher of the *Journal* and the *Sentinel*. I respected his character and management ability, but I assumed the professional skills of the newsroom were out of his line. One night, long before my city hall assignment, some major development took place in the Korean War; I happened to be "in the slot" as telegraph editor (no line of work has more pervasive jargon than news), and I ordered out 72-point type (an inch high) for a "banner"—a headline across the top of all eight front-page columns. I was admiring this display between editions when Bill Hoyt came in on some late errand and looked over my shoulder.

Rigid Standards

"Terrific," he said, pointing at my cherished banner. "What type will you use when the war's over?"

That not only said something to me about proportion and news values; I began to realize then that the rigid standards of the *Journal* and the high quality of our staff in those years hadn't happened by accident. We could have been putting out a paper full of boiler plate and Afghanistanism with a third of the staff and care, and the balance sheet probably would have looked better at the board meetings. But Hoyt and the owner of the papers, Gordon Gray—one of the Reynolds Tobacco Company heirs and at that time a high official in the Eisenhower administration—wanted a quality newspaper to serve Winston-Salem well. And Hoyt had known how to go about it; he brought in good people—like Wallace Carroll, the executive editor, and Leon Dure before him—and gave them the leeway and support to do good work. By the time I applied for a job on the *Journal*, it was the most widely admired paper in North Carolina, at least among journalists. The basic reason was that it reflected the character of its community, even though in its limitations as well as in its strengths.

Very Nearly Rah-Rah

Winston-Salem was a wealthy city, strongly oriented to business, and its leading families had put down strong cultural and economic roots there—the Reynolds Building was then the tallest in the state. Community spirit was very nearly rah-rah. There was an active arts center, many lecture and music series, a good symphony orchestra (I got in a season as music critic, cribbing shamelessly from record jackets). The city's United Fund drive was annually successful; if the public didn't come through, the major businesses made up the difference. A big fund drive produced a splendid new library building with the latest audio-visual equipment; there weren't many books in it, but they came later. Local ownership like that of Gordon Gray, in such a city, was bound to result in a newspaper of high quality—which in turn got impressive support from local advertisers.

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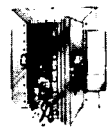

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On the other hand, Winston-Salem was not a city to question itself too deeply, and the *Journal* reflected that quality, too. The names of leading citizens and companies could somehow fail to appear in disagreeable stories. Such stories themselves could be cut, rewritten, buried, or thrown away. The cigarette-cancer connection got short shrift in our newsroom. The *Journal* did not often cut against the grain of the power structure, of which it was in fact a part, nor turn over many local rocks to see what might be underneath. It did provide solid news coverage of community affairs, brilliant feature writing and photography, sensible editorial comment, ample national and world news, and a high degree of literacy and accuracy. When the power structure proposed a bond issue for a new hospital, the *Journal* explored the plan thoroughly, reporting its flaws as well as its advantages, but supported the proposal editorially. Just before the bond election, Worth Bacon, the managing editor, sent me out to do a man-in-the-street poll. I came back with a story that showed my respondents fairly heavily opposed to the new hospital (the organized opposition insisted the old one could be renovated at less expense).

Looking more anxious than usual, Worth finally decided not to run my story. It would look too much like editorializing in the news columns, he told me with his usual apologetic air. With a young man's arrogance, I shouted something about "cowardice" and stalked out of the newsroom—a loser not for the last time in an encounter with objective journalism.

But Worth had a point. My survey was entirely unscientific, consisting of 25 or 30 people stopped at random on the street—and at that in a section of town where low-income people were most likely to be found shopping. They varied widely in their knowledge—if any—of the issue. That my story reported public sentiment, however unrepresentative and uninformed, against a new hospital might indeed have been damaging at the polls to its proponents.

But Worth himself had asked for the survey. I had conducted it honestly, if unscientifically. There was no doubt in my mind that if my respondents had *favored* the hospital, Worth would not long have worried about editorializing in the news columns. That was not his fault so much as that of the city he worked in and the tradition of journalism in which he had been trained. I did not fully realize then what I believe now—that objective journalism almost always favors Establishment positions and exists not least to avoid offense to them. If I had known that, I would have spared a man I liked some unjustifiably harsh words.

But if the *Journal*, faithfully reflecting a community run benevolently from the top, could be somewhat less than inquisitive and somewhat more than cooperative on some community affairs, it could and did reflect the best in the community, too. After the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, which ruled out segregated schools, Winston-Salem was one of the first cities in the South to admit a black student to one of its high schools—naturally, the R.J. Reynolds High School. That action resulted from the decision of community leaders who, whatever their racial views, did not want their cherished city torn apart, and who no doubt hoped to "contain" desegregation at the lowest level of demand from the black community. No matter—they opted for change and compliance, rather than bitterness and resistance.

The *Journal* supported that decision; unlike most newspapers in the South at the time, its reporting and editorial comment provided a pillar of common sense and rationality. Twenty years later I know that that single editorial stand by a newspaper I loved persuaded me finally that a man might spend his life honorably and perhaps even usefully in the American press.

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II: The New York Times

At 6:00 p.m., November 20, 1962, President John F. Kennedy's 45th news conference opened in the State Department auditorium. As White House correspondent for *The New York Times*, I was in a privileged seat in the first row, directly in front of the lectern hung with the presidential seal. On one side of me sat Eddie Folliard, the venerable and humorous White House correspondent for *The Washington Post*; on the other side was Don Irwin, White House reporter for the New York *Herald Tribune*. Farther along the front row, on either side of my central seat, a White House shorthand reporter and correspondents for *Time, Newsweek*, the three television networks, the two wire services, and several other leading news organizations occupied assigned seats.

The rest of the auditorium—its size reduced by half because of screens erected across its middle—was filled with members of the Washington press seated on a first-come, first-served basis. Most were able and respected, but only those of us in the assigned seats down front could be all but assured that Kennedy would recognize us—the so-called "regulars," who represented the major news organizations at the White House.

Scattered through the crowd of reporters—over whose shoulders peered the ubiquitous television and newsreel cameras—were numerous other *New York Times* reporters, including James Reston, the Washington bureau chief and by anyone's measure the most prestigious and respected reporter in Washington. As *Times* bureau chief through most of the Eisenhower administration and all of Kennedy's, Reston had made a ritual of the *Times*' news-conference coverage.

An hour or so before each Eisenhower or Kennedy news conference, Reston would call in his White House correspondent; Wally Carroll, by this time the bureau's news editor; and a number of *Times* reporters—some volunteers, some Reston had specifically asked for in anticipation of subjects he thought likely to arise. For perhaps an hour, the group would discuss recent developments in the news, imminent prospects, whatever seemed most of public interest at the moment.

Out of this session would come a sort of priority list of questions that the group wanted put to Eisenhower, later Kennedy, with the White House correspondent to ask the most important from his privileged seat. The other questions would be asked as various *Times* reporters gained recognition; or if someone else asked one of our questions, it could, of course, be passed over for the next subject on the *Times*' list.

Each question would be planned, not only in its substance but for the actual phrasing that would most likely elicit a useful answer. The latter process was of considerable importance, because any skillful politician can evade almost any question; only the most tactically and semantically pointed inquiry is likely to compel him or her into a definite answer, if he or she doesn't want to give one—which is usually the case.

To say to a President at a news conference, for example—"Mr. President, would you comment, please, on reports that your policy on aid levels, particularly with regard to Africa, may be undergoing study and revision?"—is to hand him, and deferentially at that, a license to filibuster for three minutes, at the end of which

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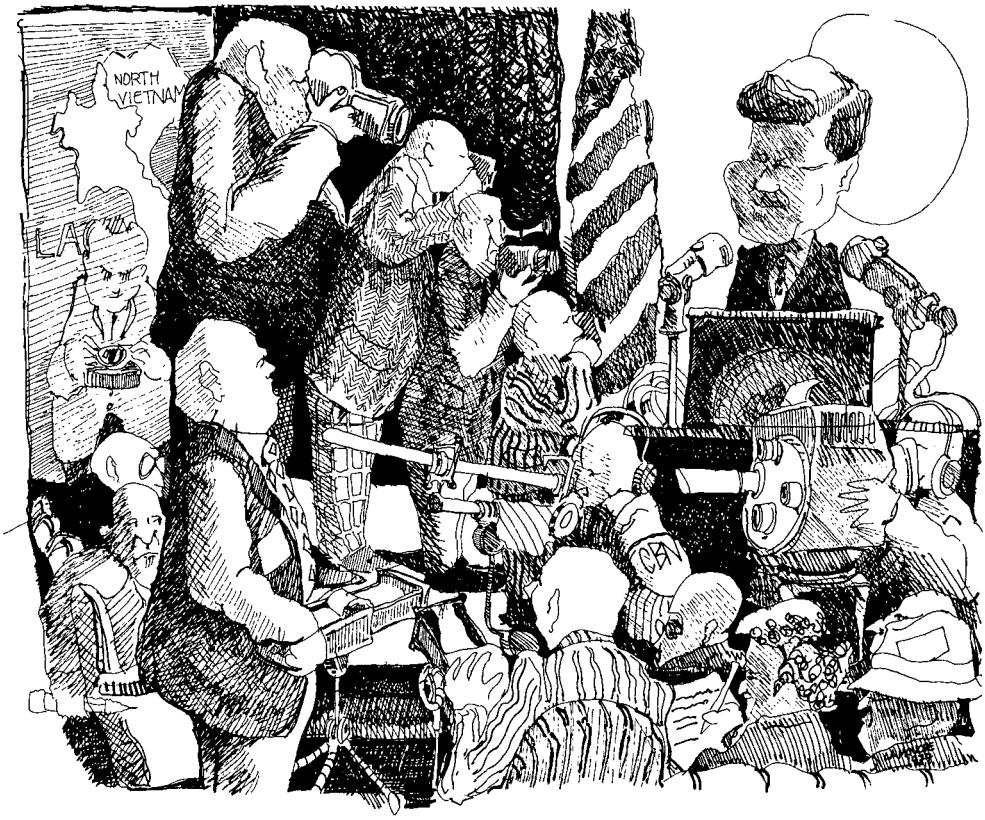

probably much that is self-serving but little that is informative will have been said—unless, of course, that particular President has just been waiting for some such opening to announce for political and diplomatic effect that he is curtailing aid to Africa because, say, some African governments have been flouting American interests in the United Nations. In that case, the question—which is of the type reporters call "softballs," because they are so easy for politicians to knock over the fence—may well have been "planted" by the White House in order to elicit a prepared answer.

On the other hand, suppose for his own political or diplomatic reasons a President would rather not talk about aid to Africa. If a reporter, believing the subject nevertheless to be of legitimate public interest, framed the following question—"Mr. President, is it true that the State Department has informed the appropriations subcommittee in the House that no further aid beyond what's in the pipeline should go to Uganda? And if it is true, why did you order this action?"—he might possibly force an answer, because any President put in such a position probably would rather make his own case, however weak, than have a possibly hostile member of a House subcommittee leaking *his* version of events. So a wily reporter might ask the question that way even if he had no such "leak" from the subcommittee.

Sometimes, of course, the best-laid plans of mice and men—and reporters can be found to fit both categories—go awry. For example, here is how effectively Kennedy once evaded a rather pointed question on a subject then of considerable embarrassment to him:

"Q. Mr. President, can you say whether the four Americans who died in the Bay of Pigs invasion were employees of the government or the CIA?

"A. Let me just say about these four men: They were serving their country. The flight that cost them their lives was a volunteer flight and

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that while, because of the nature of their work, it has not been a matter of public record, as it might be in the case of soldiers or sailors, I can say that they were serving their country. As I say, their work was volunteer."

After long and solemn deliberations around Reston's desk on January 15, 1962, I was entrusted with a question for President Kennedy that perhaps ten *Times* reporters had honed to what we thought was a fine point. Kennedy could not entirely evade it, we were sure. So as soon as he recognized me later that day, I arose—feeling the cameras aim flatteringly at me—and demanded in my sternest voice: "Mr. President, are American troops now in combat in Vietnam?"

Kennedy looked at me—six feet away and slightly beneath his elevated lectern—as if he thought I might be crazy.

"No," he said crisply—not another word—and pointed at someone else for the next question.

He gave me no chance to follow up, and in any case I was too startled by the brevity of his answer and perhaps not well-enough informed on the matter to have challenged it. It was, we learned later, a lie—unless troops are "in combat" only when they fight by companies and battalions and not when they are acting as "advisers" in combat. That was the one kind of response we did not then expect from a President of the United States; later, we would not have been so naive.

Anything Under the Sun

The fact is that presidential news conferences—particularly on television—are far more nearly instruments by which Presidents manage the news in their favor than by which reporters extract from them information the public might not otherwise get. Presidents have unlimited numbers of experts and staff assistants to brief them on anything under the sun. Their press aides spend hours listing every conceivable subject that might be raised by temerarious reporters and devising answers most advantageous to the President. By the time a President steps before the press, there is almost no chance to surprise him or trap him, and none at all to force him to answer what he does not want to answer. Any question of even remote relevance to his activities will evoke an answer carefully planned and rehearsed to serve the President's purposes to the greatest extent possible. And, in fact, the remoter the relevance, the better, as a quick answer then displays for the television audience the catholicity of the great man's knowledge.

Elaborate preparation makes error at a news conference unlikely and assures that most of what a President says is only what he wants to say; so does the skill in phrasemaking and turning questions to his own advantage without which he could not have been elected President.

It's true that the style and manners of a President often convey more than they intend—the false preachiness of Lyndon Johnson, the shifty desperation of Richard Nixon under Watergate pressures (and, even earlier, his air of being always under iron and calculated self-control). In contrast, of the other Presidents I frequently saw at news conferences, Eisenhower conveyed the impression of calm, fatherly competence, Main Street common sense, and soldier's steel. Even his nomadic syntax was familiar and reassuring, like that of a Rotary Club treasurer. Kennedy's news-conference style cast him as the keen young executive of the computer generation, the cool, businesslike manager of the national enterprise—a pacesetter for a generation that believed in living well, looking sharp, and knowing all the answers.

Lyndon Johnson, who could dominate any room merely by walking into it, and whose vivid personality and salty speech may have been unique in presidential history—at least since Andrew Jackson—either couldn't or feared to convey his personal force in

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television news conferences. He would usually begin such an affair with one or more long and rambling announcements that his press secretary might as easily have made. If he were making public some appointment to office, he might have the sheepish appointee on hand to be displayed coast-to-coast. As much as ten minutes of a half-hour news conference might be used in this fashion, and if the opening announcements had been of sufficient substance, questions concerning them might require most of the rest of the time. By that device alone, Johnson often managed to shape more than half of a news conference to his liking.

The Planted Question

Another device Johnson and Kennedy used—as no doubt other Presidents have and will—was the planted question. A compliant reporter, willing to do a favor for the press secretary in return for some imagined future news break or leak, would be told to ask the President a particular question; the President then would be sure to recognize that reporter; and the White House would have prepared, of course, an answer that was highly useful to the administration, the more so for appearing spontaneous.

I once was approached by a Kennedy administration official—not Salinger—and told that if I asked the President about a civil-rights development in the South, I would "get a good answer." I said I would ask my own questions, and I was never again solicited during that administration. But at the news conference that followed I was not surprised to hear the question asked, just as it had been suggested that I ask it. And, indeed, Kennedy rattled off a "good answer" —very good for him.

One reporter I know saw nothing pernicious in this practice and agreed to ask Kennedy a question on an economics issue. He leapt to his feet at the proper moment and Kennedy pointed in his direction. But another reporter directly in front of the plant thought *he* was being recognized and spoke first. To the plant's astonishment, the reporter who had mistakenly seized the floor asked exactly the economics question Kennedy had wanted, and, of course, got the planned answer. Taking no chances, the White House had recruited *two* plants on the same question—maybe more, for all I know.

On the other hand, Presidents are adept at not recognizing anyone they dislike, desire to punish, or from whom they've learned to expect embarrassing or difficult questions—which is why, for example, the aggressive Clark Mollenhoff of the *Des Moines Register* appeared to some viewers of the last few Nixon news conferences to be about ready to attack Nixon physically. If the oversized Mollenhoff, long known to Nixon as a relentless questioner, hadn't roared and leaped around as much as he did, obviously grabbing the attention of the television audience, Nixon could and probably would have simply ignored him. Similarly, of course, Presidents seldom fail to recognize those they consider friendly or whose known views are favorable.

Taking questions from an audience of editors and publishers, Kennedy once appalled Salinger by first calling on Vermont Royster, then the editor of the anti-Kennedy *Wall Street Journal*. Royster, short and feisty, fulfilled Salinger's apprehension with the kind of acerbic question for which he was well known.

"Why'd you call on *him* first?" Salinger later asked.

"The little bastard was the only one whose name I knew," Kennedy confessed.

All Too Eager

If most Presidents easily turn news conferences to their own advantage—although toward the end, Nixon was in just too much trouble to manage

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it—reporters sometimes seem all too eager to help them, and not just by accepting planted questions (which few do). Among hundreds of clamoring reporters, only a few can be recognized, not necessarily the boldest or most thoughtful. Usually less than 25 questions can be asked and answered in a 30-minute session. Not infrequently, a good question is asked so loosely or ineptly as to produce a useless answer, on which a President can then righteously stand, by referring further questioners back to it.

There is almost never any real continuity of subject matter from one reporter to the next, for the human reason that most reporters come armed with a fixed idea of what they want to ask, and insist on asking it—although the previous answer well may have opened a far more useful line of inquiry. The result is that at almost every presidential news conference too many *subjects* are raised and too little is said about any one of them.

Kennedy's news conference of November 20, 1962, was highly unusual, and an air of tension and excitement pervaded the State Department auditorium as Kennedy strode across the stage to his lectern. He had not met the press since September 13, more than two months earlier, except for a special news conference on September 26 with business editors, when questions about the economy alone had been allowed. On November 6 there had been state and congressional elections in which, after unusually extensive campaigning by Kennedy, the Democrats had done marginally better than expected.

More important, on October 22, Kennedy had informed a startled American people of the installation of offensive missile sites by the Soviet Union in Cuba. In nearly apocalyptic tones, he had announced a naval quarantine against any further military shipments, and demanded that Chairman Khrushchev remove the Soviet missiles already in Cuba.

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On October 28, after a period of the greatest world tension since the dawning of the atomic age, Kennedy had been able to announce the Soviets' agreement to withdrawal of the missiles. But by November 20, he had not yet met with the press to discuss any of his actions during the Cuban crisis. Most reporters considered the delay deliberate on his part, both to avoid the possibility of some diplomatic provocation to Moscow and so that Kennedy could take the most political advantage of continuing developments in Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

So it proved. The President opened on November 20 with the statement that Khrushchev had agreed further to withdraw all Soviet IL-28 bombers from Cuba. That was the carefully stated preface to Kennedy's own announcement that he was therefore lifting the naval quarantine he had ordered on October 22. And he cautiously confirmed that if offensive weapons were kept out of Cuba and that island was not used "for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean." In short, he concluded, "the record of recent weeks shows real progress, and we are hopeful that further progress can be made."

Then—turning 180 degrees to another subject—he announced the issuance of an executive order designed to prevent racial discrimination in housing—two full years after he had promised in his 1960 campaign to sign such an order. Finally he said he had dispatched a team headed by W. Averell Harriman to New Delhi to assess India's military-assistance needs in its border warfare with Communist China.

'Soft' With Khrushchev

There have been few better examples of a President's using a news conference to manage the news. Already, in both parties, after the first flush of "victory" and relief in the easing of the missile crisis, critics were saying that Kennedy had been too "soft" during the confrontation with Khrushchev. Dean Acheson, the hawkish former Democratic Secretary of State, was making little secret of his belief that Kennedy should have ordered air strikes on the missile sites; Republicans were arguing that in return for the removal of the missiles, Kennedy had given the Castro regime in Cuba "immunity" against invasion, a price they apparently considered too high.

So Kennedy had waited until he could announce the Soviets' withdrawal of the IL-28s before he met the press, and had seized the moment to cushion the announcement that he was lifting the naval quarantine—an act sure to arouse the hawks. He had described his part of the bargain not as a pledge of any kind to Castro but as assuring "peace in the Caribbean" —but only, of course, if Castro stayed on his good behavior. From the news conference forum, the President had forcefully taken the initiative against his critics, waiting until he could use the relatively unimportant withdrawal of the IL-28s to cast the Caribbean agreement in his own terms as—implicitly—an American triumph for which he had had to give up little in return.

Questioning began, predictably, with Cuba and even more expectably on what Frank Cormier of the Associated Press called Kennedy's "no-invasion pledge." The President immediately took shelter from that loaded phrase behind his opening statement; that set out, he said, "the position of the government on the matter." Clearly, he was not going to be drawn beyond his carefully worded description: "peace in the Caribbean."

Five of the first seven questions derived directly from the missile crisis; none of them pushed Kennedy significantly further than his opening statement. All told, ten of the 17 questioners at the November 20 news conference asked him something about Cuba, Castro, Khrushchev, the

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missiles, or related circumstances—a show of interest that was only to be expected.

What might also have been expected, and probably was in the White House, was that only one question dealt with the housing proclamation—an act Kennedy had said in his campaign he could effect "with the stroke of a pen" but which, for political reasons, he had not taken during the first two years of his administration. Obviously he had chosen the missile-crisis news conference to "downplay" this long-awaited, controversial announcement; he and Salinger knew so much attention would be centered on the dramatic confrontation with Khrushchev that little if any questioning would be devoted to Kennedy's long delay on the housing order, or its effect—which later proved limited. Only one question was asked, in fact, about the mission to India, and only one about the just-completed national elections; the missile crisis dominated the half-hour, and mostly in the favorable terms in which Kennedy had cast it in his opening statement.

The news conference came to an end, as usual, with Merriman Smith of United Press International, then the senior White House correspondent, shouting "Thank you, Mr. President!" after Kennedy had answered a final question with the judgment: "I think this is a very climactic period." Wire-service reporters and those with immediate newspaper or broadcast deadlines sprinted for the bank of telephones in a corridor outside the State Department auditorium. The rest of us began drifting out, talking over what had been said, what "the lead" was; no one doubted it was the withdrawal of the IL-28s and the lifting of the quarantine.

I recall no discussion of some important questions that had *not* been asked that day, nor of the answers to them that might have been given. Just six weeks before, on the night of September 30, 1962, 17 days *after* his last news conference, Kennedy and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy

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had used federal marshals and 20,000 federal troops to force the registration of James Meredith, a black, at the previously segregated University of Mississippi. Before the troops arrived to disperse an unruly white mob and put an end to a rock-throwing, shotgun, and tear-gas battle between the mob and the marshals, more than a third of the 160 marshals were injured, 28 by gunfire. A French reporter, Paul Guihard, and a bystander were killed, in one of the biggest pitched battles ever waged between the American government and a group of its citizens.

The Kennedy brothers—it could be seen in hindsight—had over-estimated the reliability of the Mississippi state police, failed to arm, equip, and organize the marshals adequately, misjudged Governor Ross R. Barnett's willingness to compromise and had waited too long, allowing the situation in Mississippi to become inflamed before acting forcefully. No doubt a lot of Americans, however, and not just in the South, thought in 1962 that the administration was moving too far and too fast to force integration. On the other hand, Meredith's entry into the University of Mississippi, a temple of segregation, was one of the great symbolic triumphs of the civil-rights struggles of the sixties. Yet none of the questions that *might* have arisen, let alone those that *ought* to have been asked, had been put forward in the first news conference the President had had since the bloody night of September 30, 51 days earlier.

Of course, there had been ample time between that night and October 19, when Kennedy had been alerted to the missile crisis, for a news conference at which the events at Ole Miss surely would have been central. But the President had used the handy excuse that he was then campaigning hard for the election of Democrats to Congress; and it's altogether likely that even without the missile crisis intervening, the canny Salinger would have kept Kennedy out of the State Department auditorium for a long time after the Ole Miss battle. However that may be, there can be but one place to fix the responsibility for an astonishing failure to question Kennedy about the Mississippi drama.

That place, of course, is on the press itself; not even the kind of careful preparation that was then the practice of the Washington bureau of the *Times* had prevented a signal failure. No minutes of our planning meetings were kept, and I don't remember if we actually listed a question about the Mississippi incident and failed to get it in. More likely, another element of journalism and modern life—what I call "dailiness"—intervened. In the six weeks after the battle at Ole Miss, the onrush of events in a world of omnipresent communications had pushed the battle too far into the past for it to retain significant presence in the minds of journalists preoccupied with the world's narrow escape from nuclear war and whose attention had been focused on the missile crisis by the President's opening statement.

So no one asked Kennedy, for example:

"Mr. President, if you had it to do over, would you have handled Governor Barnett differently in the Ole Miss crisis?"

No doubt Kennedy was just as happy no one raised the subject. My own failure to do so gives ironic point to an exchange between Kennedy and my wife at a White House dinner. It was the first time we had been invited to such an affair and we were naturally excited. When we were walking from the East Room along the long corridor to the State Dining Room, my wife almost fainted when Kennedy himself came up beside her, grinning, and took her arm.

"What's it feel like when you see your husband on TV standing up to question the President?" he asked.

"I'm always terrified," Neva said.

Kennedy laughed out loud. "I am too," he said, but even then I knew better. ■

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Tidbits and Outrages

We Do Our Part

Another indication that there may be an excess of secrecy in the government comes from the Pentagon in the form of a proud announcement by the Department of Defense that it is saving energy by burning up its daily disposal of classified documents. What's the quantity of such documents each day? Ten tons.

Postal Service Posts Sizzling .813 Average . . .

The Department of Agriculture recently completed a survey of meat and poultry inspection at 7,500 processing plants. Agriculture employees packed the forms in cardboard boxes capable of taking 90 pounds of stress, secured them with fibrous glass tape, and mailed them to the department's computer center in Des Moines. While the forms were in the care of the United States Postal Service, according to Bob Wyrick of *Newsday*, those concerning 1,400 of the plants were damaged, destroyed, or delivered to the wrong people.

. . . Edging Slumping Sunshine Act

The Sunshine Act was passed in 1976 to open up the government agencies to the public. But a recent Library of Congress study shows that of 1,003 government meetings listed in the Federal Register between March and September, 627 were either completely or partially closed to the public. An example is a closed meeting that the Federal Reserve board held to consider the design of its office furniture. The Fed closed the meeting on the ground that "matters of sensitive financial nature were being considered by the board."

Credit Where Due

On October 19 of this year Colonel R. D. Heinl, Jr. wrote in *The Detroit News* that the CIA was planning to fire 800 of its clandestine employees. A couple of weeks later *The Washington Post* called him and requested a copy of the story. Heinl sent it, and on November 12 a three-column headline in the *Post* announced as new news, "CIA Begins a Purge of Spy Division." There was no mention of Colonel Heinl or of *The Detroit News*.

Be Patient, Duane

If your opinion of lawyers and courts has been rising lately, we urge you to read this report from UPI:

"CHICAGO, Nov. 23—Lt. Col. Duane Swimley spent the day in divorce court again today, one more day in his four-year battle to divorce the wife who has been convicted of trying to have him killed and is now suing him for an automobile.

"Swimley, 48, a 24-year Air Force veteran, was told by a judge the case has been continued until Jan. 18 because 'the lawyers weren't ready.'

" 'Are they all nuts?' Swimley said. 'It's easy to talk about not being ready for trial when I'm paying everyone's bills, I suppose.

" 'I've tried everything. I just don't understand it. A guy's wife tries to kill him and he gets kicked around in the courts like an old duffel bag.'

"His wife, Marlene, 37, was convicted by a Cook County Circuit Court jury in 1975 of solicitation to commit murder, and was sentenced to three to nine years in prison. She has been free on bond for the last 30 months, pending an appeal.

"Mrs. Swimley continues to draw $1,100 a month temporary support ordered by the court in April 1974.

"She petitioned the court today to hold her husband in contempt for failing to fix her leaking roof, provide her with either his Lincoln Continental or a Ford Ranchero as transportation, and correct a faulty septic tank."

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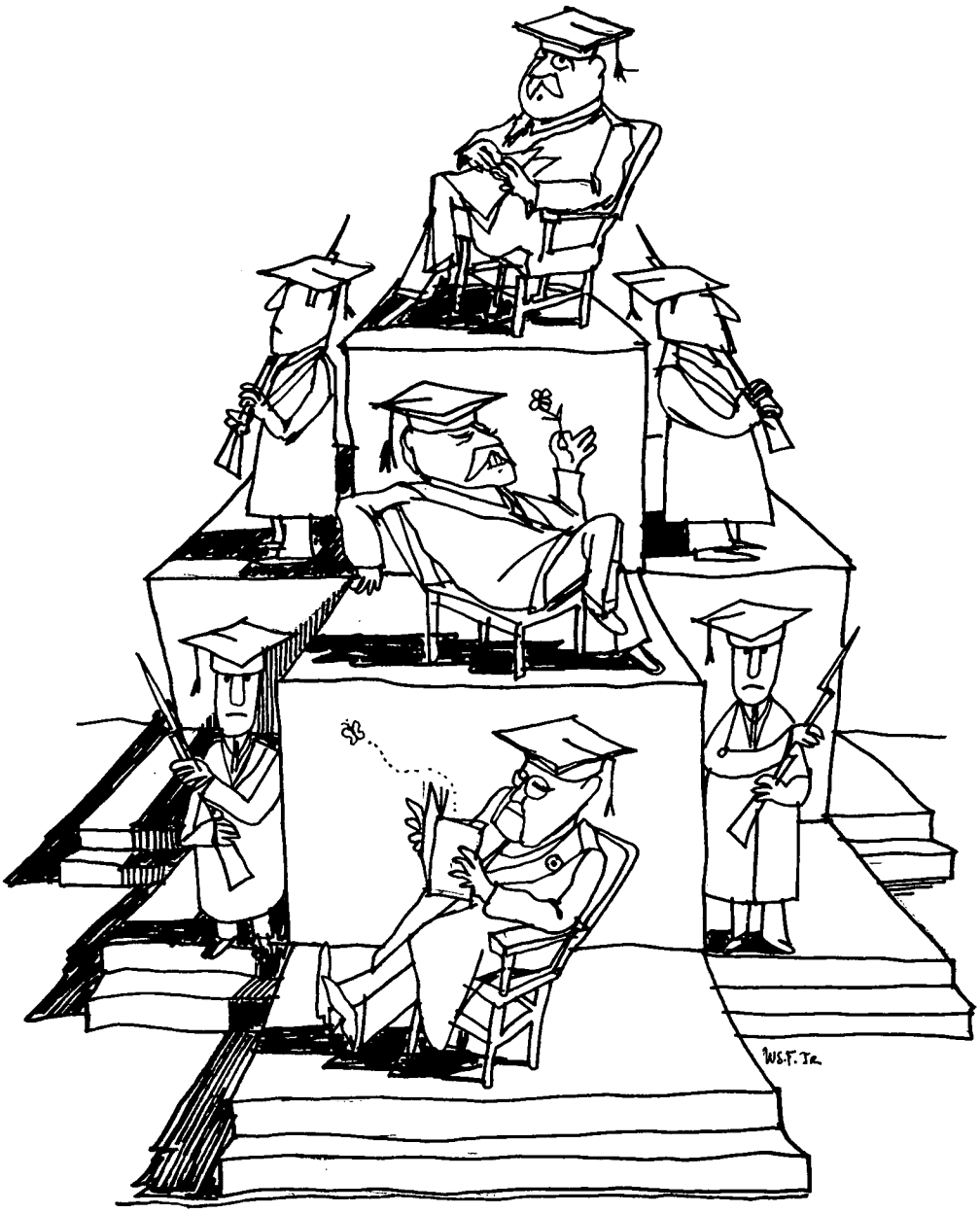

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The Trouble With Tenure

by Mark Nadel

After a painful period of withdrawal, I can now openly admit that I was once a tenure junkie. I played all the appropriate academic games, I bowed and scraped, I acted with a naivete uncommon in grown man—all this in pursuit of tenure, the quintessential academic tribal rite.

For the uninitiated, I should explain: tenure in a university virtually guarantees a professor life-time employment regardless of future worth or conduct. In theory, a tenured professor can be fired for gross misconduct; in practice, that's even more difficult than getting rid of an incompetent civil servant, and it happens less frequently.

Mark Nadel, a former assistant professor at Cornell, is now a senior analyst at the Government Research Corporation.

Like any system of professional job security, tenure is justified in terms of lofty ideals. But in effect it creates a privileged class that runs our educational institutions and is almost entirely unaccountable for its conduct and competence. The same unaccountability exists in other tenured fields, but seldom with the aura of nobility it carries in academia.

The main stated reason for academic tenure is that it is the only sure way to guarantee academic freedom—indeed, within the profession tenure and academic freedom are commonly seen as the same thing. The governing statement on the subject is the 1940

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Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American Association of University Professors, and it argues that only if a professor has secure, permanent employment can he be truly free to express his views without fear of reprisal. To the AAUP, this freedom is at the very heart of the exchange of ideas that is the essential business of a university, and tenure is central to it. This is an impressive argument; if tenure is a prerequisite of academic freedom, then having some deadwood on the payroll is a small price to pay for it.

But when closely examined the connection between tenure and academic freedom begins to crumble. There are two kinds of free expression that tenure is supposed to protect: freedom to express political opinions outside the classroom, and freedom to express scholarly opinions inside it.

The first kind first: certainly professors shouldn't be fired for their political views—but neither should anyone else. Why should tenured professors alone be afforded this protection? We should protect not professors alone, but also automobile workers, accountants, and pharmacists, too, from economic reprisal as they exercise their rights as citizens. Even the American Civil Liberties Union does not argue that lifetime employment is necessary to guarantee those rights.

Dismissing the Unorthodox

Moreover, some colleges have used the tenure decision to enforce whatever political orthodoxy currently prevails. The most notorious recent case involved a Brooklyn College political scientist named Michael Selzer. After Selzer returned from a research trip to Europe, a CIA agent called him and they discussed his research over the telephone. Selzer's colleagues, when they got wind of this, were up in arms, and recommended that he be dismissed. Shortly thereafter Selzer came up for tenure. Although his department had recommended him for promotion the previous year, this time it denied him tenure—on academic grounds, of course, the department chairman said later.

When we turn to the second kind of academic freedom—the freedom to express scholarly opinions—the argument for tenure breaks down again. Freedom to hold scholarly views is something tenured professors certainly have, but their nontenured colleagues certainly don't. For assistant professors the tenure system has more often been used to suppress academic freedom than to protect it.

Arcane Theories

The paradox of tenure is that the scholars who are doing most of the writing and teaching and who are most likely to challenge prevailing views are the young scholars who do not have tenure. They are totally vulnerable, especially because they may be judged by those same professors whose views they are challenging.

Particularly in the humanities and social sciences, arcane theories and methodologies are embraced with all the passion and myopia of the American Legion holding forth on the Panama Canal. In hiring and tenure decisions, differences in dogma are commonly regarded as considerations of merit. Young professors who toe the line, who carefully do research narrow and irrelevant enough not to discomfort their superiors, often have a much easier time of it than smart young Turks who are challenging the prevailing views in their fields. Robert Trivers, a founder of the new discipline of sociobiology, was recently denied tenure at Harvard—although the university of course denied that his heretical theory of human behavior was the reason. Carl Sagan was another young professor with a bold approach whom Harvard let go. Of course, Sagan and Trivers both lived on to fight another day. Others who are less fortunate have been exiled to lesser colleges with less time and resources for research; the much

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celebrated free exchange of ideas is the poorer for that.

Defenders of tenure believe that the main threat to academic freedom comes from outside the faculty—from yahoos in state legislatures, or from militant students. But at least as great is the threat that comes from those with tenure, who can severely limit the academic freedom of the younger colleagues without ever having to answer for their conduct.

Tenure committees, of course, maintain they are judging only on the basis of merit and not ideological considerations. But the logic of tenure is that hiring and firing decisions are intrinsically threatening to academic freedom and professors must therefore be insulated from those threats. By their own logic, then, tenured professors deny academic freedom to their nontenured colleagues. Either job security is essential to academic freedom or it is not. If it is essential, universities are in the ludicrous position of saying that academic freedom is vital for senior faculty members but not so important for junior faculty members.

No One Would Get Fired

Academic freedom is not the only rationalization for tenure, nor is the threat to academic freedom the only fault of tenure. Defenders of tenure argue that the present system forces universities to make tough, final judgments on whether young professors meet their standards of excellence. Without tenure, the argument runs, no one would ever get fired, and substandard professors would stay on year after year. In theory, this is a valid argument. In practice, it isn't. The tenure system does not reliably result in the promotion and retention of professors of demonstrated high quality. Often it does precisely the opposite.

At all major colleges and universities, and increasingly at minor ones, merit is defined as published research. Bows are made in the direction of teaching and service on administrative committees (an activity usually performed by people who are neither inclined toward nor adept at teaching or research). But everyone knows that scholarly reputations are made by publishing; the admonition to "publish or perish" is normally well taken.

Do Nothing and Do Well

However, it is possible to publish and still perish, or to do nothing and do well. Every professor knows of departments or whole colleges where promotions are based entirely on internal faculty politics. In my former department at Cornell, during the six years I was there, and subsequently as I watched at a bemused distance there has been no consistent relationship between promotion and any observable measure of individual merit. Shortly before such discrimination became more difficult, tenure was denied to a prominent female political scientist but was awarded at the same time to a man in the same department with a considerably more meager record. Three years ago, a former colleague who was finishing his third book, was on the editorial board of a major political science journal, and was an innovative and popular teacher, was denied tenure. This happened despite the fact (or probably because of the fact) that his research exceeded in quality and quantity that of all the professors voting against him. Similarly, when I was up for tenure myself, I had the strange experience of being told by the department chairman, who hadn't written anything substantial in 20 years, that I was being turned down because my second book wasn't as good as my first book and it was only my second book that counted. More recently, however, in the very same department a tenure candidate whose only appreciable scholarly work in ten years of teaching was a dissertation that he had been unable to get published, but who was more popular with his colleagues, was voted tenure.

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Cornell's record in most social science departments may seem bizarre, but it is not unique. In many institutions different standards are used for different individuals.

Academia and Law Firms

But all this is the stuff of academic novels. It should surprise no one that promotions in academia, like promotions elsewhere, run the gamut from merit-based to politics- or personality -based. Unlike most other promotions, however, those in universities are binding for life; and unlike tenure decisions in places like law firms, for instance, there is remarkably little incentive to make meritocratic decisions. Making poor choices won't cause a department to lose business. Certainly no professor wants his department to become a laughingstock in the field because of its low quality, but there's also a temptation not to appoint anyone too brilliant or too ambitious, for fear that he'll overshadow you. Particularly now, with the academic job market contracting, many senior professors who either got tenure when times were easier or haven't kept up with their fields are sitting in judgment of younger professors who by any standards are better teachers and researchers.

In this kind of situation, where the temptation exists to make the wrong decisions, it's easy to do. A common way to fabricate cases for or against tenure is to make up tales about the tenure candidate's teaching. With few exceptions, all professors have some ardent fans among students and some detractors. If, for example, Bud Goodfellow is popular with his senior colleagues but has the embarrassing drawback of having no demonstrated qualifications for tenure, all his fan letters are forwarded to the appropriate committees and deans while any negative comment is conveniently ignored. When there's a loser in department political battles whom the department seeks to fire, a substantial record of research and publication makes that hard to do—but that's what teaching is for. Unless the professor is widely popular with undergraduates, a state of nirvana achieved by precious few, it is easy enough to lie about his teaching and make it appear that the department is doing students a favor by denying him tenure. The unfortunate result of these hoaxes is that in most large departments teaching—which should be a hiring criterion of the utmost importance—is not taken seriously except as a means of building a case based on personal biases.

Institutional Commitment

Even at its best, tenure locks an institution into a lifetime commitment to people, and that can be terribly damaging to any institution. The best-known fault of the system is that it creates and sustains deadwood —people who may have been good when they got tenure, but aren't any more. Some people naturally decline in ability; others the system encourages to decline. Just as the desire to get tenure is a powerful motivation to work hard, tenure itself is a powerful motivation to goof off. It relieves the job holder of having to maintain any level of competence, let alone excellence. Every student knows of tenured professors who haven't read, let alone written, a scholarly article in 25 years, and who haven't revised their lecture notes in as long either. All tenured professors talk about their big books that are underway, but between two-hour lunches, perfecting a forehand, and occasionally teaching, those books often never seem to get written. Having tenure means that for years professors can pretend to be accomplishing something without anyone checking to see if they really are. One professor at Cornell lists among the publications on his curriculum vitae an unwritten book on judicial politics that he first announced as forthcoming ten years ago.

A Senate committee staff director

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I once worked for asked me how the professional staff members of Congress compared to academics. There was no question in my mind that the Senate staffers I knew were considerably brighter than most academics I had worked with. They weren't born smarter; they just had to stay smart to do their jobs and to keep them. The tenure system encourages people who should be at the prime of their professional lives to go into semi-retirement.

And these bad professors are never fired. Theoretically they can be, of course, and the AAUP says more aren't because college administrators lack the courage to take the appropriate action to deal with gross incompetents. But the AAUP, in the name of ensuring fair treatment, has made appropriate action a near-impossibility. For a professor to be fired, according to AAUP guidelines, the faculty of a college has to elect a committee to look into his case and report on it; then the college president has to start formal proceedings; then a faculty committee holds a formal hearing; then, if the hearing results in a guilty verdict, the non-producer can go. Obviously this isn't going to work as a way of weeding out the incompetents—it takes too much time and effort.

Even if professors stay as active and intelligent as they were when they got tenure, there are still flaws in the system. Tenure is not only a lifetime commitment to individuals; it's a lifetime commitment to methodologies and schools of thought. Tenure can lock colleges into today's intellectual fad for 30 years after the fad ends. It militates against change and flexibility. It is an implicit budgetary limitation on the range of inquiry that is possible in a university.

Some Signs of Life

When professors continue to grow intellectually and to contribute both in research and teaching, they are of continued value to their universities and would be kept on with or without tenure. The challenge universities have with regard to their best professors is not providing them with job security but keeping them from being lured away by other universities. The better people don't need tenure to hold on to their jobs. The great irony of tenure is that it helps most those who have the least to contribute. And those people might well contribute more if they had a little less security. Once unshielded by tenure, the deadwood might show some signs of life, in which case not only the universities but the professors themselves would be enriched.

Certainly the abolition of tenure would mean a few firings. This is the subject of much controversy, the assumption being that guaranteeing these decisions' fairness would be difficult (of course, decisions to grant tenure aren't fair either). But finding out who is and is not carrying his weight seems to be a relatively simple matter—perhaps simpler than conferring lifetime employment on someone. Administrators, if they were charged with that responsibility, could probably do it well if professors were unwilling to do so.

Security and Merit

I don't mean to say that job security should be treated cavalierly—professors have mortgages, children, and alimony payments like everyone else. But compassion, which granted, is a noble sentiment, can't be allowed to lock us into tenure systems, in academia or anywhere else. If any employment system is to be based on merit—and all tenure systems make that claim—it just can't make one hiring decision early on for each person and then stick with it for life. Merit is more complicated than that; it comes late to some and fades fast in others. A system truly devoted to merit has to find a way to size up people according to their performances throughout their careers. If it doesn't, as the experience of universities shows, real merit is the loser. ■

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"It's 52° below zero up here, but, crazy as it sounds, we need this machine to keep the ground frozen."

"When you drill for gas north of the Arctic Circle, the way we're doing here at Canada's Mackenzie Delta, you expect a lot of problems," says Bob Toole, drilling superintendent for Gulf.

"But this one's a real fooler. It's a freezing unit. Even at 52° below zero, we need it to keep the ground around the wellhead frozen.

Hot mud

"The problem is that when the drilling mud comes up from the bottom of the hole, maybe a mile down, it's hot enough to melt the permafrost that's holding up the whole rig.

"If the permafrost melted, the hole would get bigger and bigger, and the operation would have to come to a halt.

Frozen pipes

"Our freezer keeps the top thirty feet of the casing around the drill pipe at temperatures below freezing, so that doesn't happen.

"This country is probably one of the toughest spots on earth to drill for natural gas. But we're drilling the wells. We're meeting the challenge."

Gulf

Gulf people: meeting the challenge.

"At temperatures as low as this, you have to invent new ways to do almost everything."

Left to right: Bob Toole, roustabout Jacob Kuhoktak, and the freezer.

Gulf Oil Corporation

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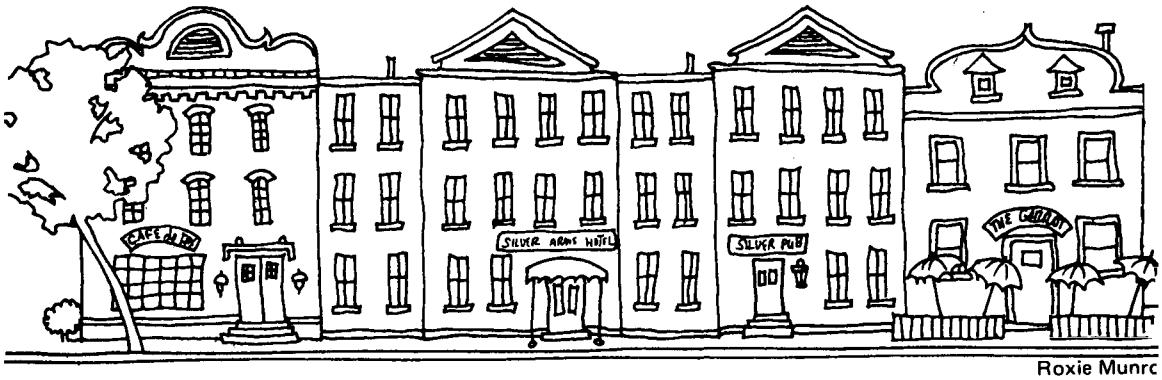

Roxie Munro

Where to Stay in Washington

by Jill Merrill

Most of our readers don't live in Washington but come here often because their work is connected with the government. For their benefit, we offer this guide to Where to Stay and alternate months, Where to Eat.

The hotels listed here are all located in the center of the city along—or near—the Connecticut Avenue corridor, beginning near K Street and ending above Rock Creek Park. They are all northwest of the White House. The places we most highly recommend are indicated by an asterisk.

Anthony House, 1823 L St., 223-4320. Single $33, double $40. 99 rooms. Restaurant. No free parking.

Barbizon Terrace, 2118 Wyoming Ave., 483-1350. Single $21, double $27. 77 rooms. No room service, no free parking. Coin laundry, restaurants nearby. Good location, just off Connecticut.

Capital Hilton, 1001 16th St., 393-1000. Single $37-$53, double $49-$65. 806 rooms. Children free, charge for parking. Several restaurants, including **Trader Vic's.** Formerly the Statler Hilton, this noisy, "convention" hotel is three blocks from the White House. It is also very close to the **Sheraton-Carlton** and the **Hay Adams** (see below) whose prices are competitive and which are infinitely preferable in other ways. They are quieter, smaller, much more attractive than the Capital Hilton—and the service is better.

Dupont Plaza, Connecticut and Massachusetts Ave., (on Dupont Circle), 483-6000. Single $49-$63, double $12 extra. 312 rooms. Rooms equipped with refrigerator, wet bar. Restaurant. No free parking. Children under 14 free.

Embassy Row, 2015 Massachusetts Ave., 265-1600. Single $40, double $50 and up, up, up. 202 rooms. No free parking. Pool and fancy restaurant (Le Consulat). Expensive, with an international atmosphere. Not for the budget-conscious.

***Executive House,** 1515 Rhode Island Ave., 232-7000. Single $30-$38 double $40-$48. 200 rooms. Pool, *free* parking. Restaurant, refrigerators in all rooms.

***Fairfax Hotel,** 2100 Massachusetts Ave., 293-2100. Single $35, double $38. 147 rooms. No free parking, two very expensive restaurants (The Jockey Club and the Sea Catch) if you're feeling flush. In addition to the very reasonable price for a double room, the Fairfax offers suites—living room, bedroom, bath, and full kitchen—at an incredibly cheap $48. There is a $5 per child charge. As this is primarily a residential hotel, the atmosphere is quiet and the rooms modest but clean.

***Gralyn Hotel,** 1745 N St., 785-1515. Single $24-$30, double $30-$38, *no* credit cards. 34 rooms. *Free* parking. Most rooms have air-conditioning and bath in this marvelous, European-style hotel which was once the Persian embassy. A grudging acquiescence to modern conveniences has been made, but apparently an elevator was too much. There is no restaurant, but a full breakfast (for $3.25) is served. Located on a charming side street as is the **Tabard Inn** (below).

Gramercy Inn, 1616 Rhode Island Ave., 347-9550. Single $42-$45, double $52-$55. 306 rooms. No free parking. Pool, restaurant. Refrigerators and wet bars in some rooms.

***Hay-Adams,** 800 16th St., 638-2260. Single $45-$62, double $55-$72. 168 rooms. Children under 14 free. This is the *grand dame* of Washington hotels. From the moment you enter these paneled halls, there is a

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feeling of history being made. Indeed, many notables do hang out here so keep a sharp eye. All the rooms are attractive. The ones overlooking the White House are more expensive, but the view is the best in Washington. No free parking, several nice restaurants.

Holiday Inn-Central, 1501 Rhode Island Ave., 483-2000. Single $33, double $43. 214 rooms. *Free* parking, pool, restaurant and kennels for pets.

Holiday Inn-Connecticut Avenue, 1900 Connecticut Ave., 332-9300. Single $33, double $43. 145 rooms. *Free* parking, pool, restaurant, and kennels.

Holiday Inn-Downtown, 1615 Rhode Island Avenue, 296-2100. Single $34, double $44. 152 rooms. *Free* parking, pool, restaurant and kennels.

Hotel John Kilpen, 2310 Ashmead Pl., 462-4336. Single $10-$17, double $19-$24. 80 rooms. There are "family suites" available at $8.25 per person. No free parking. Overwhelmingly antiseptic smell, so it must be clean. For the budget-minded. Conveniently located right off Connecticut Avenue.

***Jefferson Hotel**, 1200 16th St., 347-4707. Single $40-$45, double $45-50, suites $65-$100. 135 rooms. Children under 14 free. This is a charming hotel in the European manner. The rooms are attractively decorated, with big, old-fashioned bathrooms. The suites have full kitchens, as well as living room, bedroom, and bath. Additional charge of $5 per child. The Jefferson is centrally located, right across from the National Geographic Building—and offers the best return on one's dollar in Washington.

Madison Hotel, 15th & M Sts., 785-1000 Single $65-$80, double $80-$95. 374 rooms. No free parking, children, or anything else, for that matter. If you've just inherited an Arab Emirate, this is the place for you. Orientalia abounds and all the amenities are offered: restaurants, sauna, shops, even bars and ice in every room. You can rent a suite (no kitchen) for a paltry $150-$300 a day. What the Madison lacks in charm it compensates for in pretentiousness.

Mayflower, 1137 Connecticut Ave., 347-3000. Single $38, double $50. 700 rooms. No free parking. Children under 18 free. Restaurants. Big, bustling "convention" hotel in the heart of Washington. Lots happened here—J. Edgar Hoover dined here daily, Harry Truman predicted victory in '48.

National Hotel, 1808 I St., 628-5566. Single $20, double $22. 75 rooms. Children under 12 free. No free parking. Very reasonable. No restaurant, but there is a coffee shop. In the middle of the downtown area.

Presidential Hotel, 900 19th St., 331-9020. Single $16, double $20. Children free within reason. No restaurant, no free parking. Convenient, clean, budget hotel.

Sheraton Carlton, 923 16th St., 638-2626. Single $49 or $59, double $61 or $71. 235 rooms. Children under 17 free. No free parking, two dining rooms. Within walking distance of the White House, this stylish, old hotel offers attractively decorated rooms, good service, and a refreshing step back to another, grander day.

Sheraton Park Hotel and Motor Inn, 2660 Woodley Road, 265-2000. Single $42-$45, double $52-$55. Children under 18 free. No free parking. This is Washington's largest hotel complex, with 1600 rooms, skating rink, pools, restaurants, etc. Although above Rock Creek Park, good bus and taxi service will zip you downtown. Unfortunately, the sounds of construction shatter the sylvan setting—a new ten-story hotel building is going up behind the present main building. So if necessity demands you stay here, try the **Wardman Tower** the residential section of the hotel. These rooms are bigger and more attractive, and prices are about the same ($50-$53).

Shoreham Americana Hotel and Motel, 2500 Calvert St., 234-0700. Single $40-$50, double $50-$62. 800 rooms. Children under 14 free. No free parking. The "other" big convention hotel above Rock Creek, the Shoreham is close to the Sheraton Park. Restaurants, pool, sauna as well as lighted tennis courts.

***Tabard Inn**, 1739 N St., 785-1277. Single $18-30, double $30-56, continental breakfast included. 47 rooms. No credit cards. Restaurant. Like its neighbor, the **Gralyn**, the **Tabard** lacks an elevator. There is ample compensation, however, with recently renovated, spacious rooms with writing desks. Loaded with "old world" charm, this is where E. Everett Hale wrote *Man Without a Country*. A delightful, paneled sitting room adds to the cozy, European atmosphere.

Washington Hilton, 1919 Connecticut Ave., 483-3000. Single $40-$56, double $54-$70. 1200 rooms. Several restaurants, pool, tennis courts, shops, game room. This is a great place for kids. Children free. Various family and weekend plans available.

YWCA, 1011 17th St., 638-2100. Single $11, double $18. 160 rooms. No children, no single males. Middle of downtown area. Pool, gym, cafeteria, no free parking.

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Brooke Stauffer

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Antisocial Security

by Nicholas Lemann

Every once in a while, the federal government will do something that seems to have been calculated to foster bitterness and hostility among the populace as they realize what's being done to them. A recent example came in late October, when the House, under intense pressure from the federal employee unions, voted to shelve a plan to bring 2.6 million civil servants into the social security system. Social security is a program that congressmen and bureaucrats continually insist is a wonderful, universal, painless form of government-administered old-age insurance—but the clear message they were sending was that they wanted to stay out of it themselves. And it isn't only the gnawing feeling that we had been lied to about the virtues of social security, that as people catch on, will rankle; it's also the arrogance of the federal employees, the idea that what's good enough to be foisted on the American people isn't good enough for them.

The issue came up early in the fall, when the House Ways and Means Committee was looking for a way to stop the Social Security Administration's precipitous slide towards bankruptcy. The obvious solution was to increase the revenues of the social security system, which is most easily done by increasing the number of people who pay social security taxes (an easier remedy than greatly increasing the tax on the rest of us). The largest chunk of people who don't pay the taxes now is federal employees, so the Ways and Means Committee decided to bring them in. The social security bill it sent to the House floor in October contained a provision to do that.

When Joseph Fisher, a congressman from the Virginia suburbs of Washington who probably has more federal employee constituents than anyone else in the House, got wind of the provision, he immediately began organizing to kill it. Because it was an issue about which civil servants felt strongly, he got a lot of help. His office received hundreds of letters opposing the inclusion of federal employees in social security, and other offices received hundreds more. The employee unions lobbied hard. Fisher was unable to persuade the Ways and Means Committee to change its mind (it voted him down 22 to 13), but when he brought his case to the House floor—in the form of an amendment substituting a two-year study of the matter for immediate federal employee inclusion in social security—it passed 386 to 38. Although Fisher, a calm and reasonable economist, says he wants civil servants to be brought into social security eventually and just proposed

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his amendment to make sure the details are ironed out properly, two years seemed like an awfully long time to accomplish that task. To federal employees, the delay aspect of the Fisher amendment was a greater cause of joy than the detailed-study aspect.

On the other hand, the federal employees have a point—it just doesn't seem to be in their interest to participate in social security, and their behavior on the issue is a comment not only on their character, but on our largest domestic program as well. Most federal employees participate in the civil service retirement system, under which they pay seven per cent of their paychecks while they're working for the government and can retire after 30 years at pensions as high as $2,216 a month. Even a $15,000-a-year federal employee, which is pretty low-echelon, can retire after 30 years at $703 a month. So generous a giveaway is the system that the government's unfunded liability for its share of the benefits is now on the order of $106 billion and growing. In addition, federal employees can become eligible for social security too, by moonlighting or working in private industry before or after their government employment. As of December 31, 1975, 44 per cent of retired federal workers were drawing both government and social security pensions. A government pensioner can also get social security payments as a survivor or a dependent of his spouse.

By contrast, the maximum individual social security retirement benefit is $442 a month, and the average is $221 a month—hardly enough to live on. Federal employees can retire with handsome benefits at 55, but social security benefits don't come in full until 65. To federal employees, coverage under social security meant one of two things, both bad: either they would be in social security in addition to their present plan, which would mean paying almost 13 per cent of their paychecks for pensions, or they would have their own plan taken away and have to struggle through old age on the meager benefits of social security alone.

So their wanting to stay out was perfectly understandable, if not admirable. Social security is a mess—functionally, it's going broke; for individuals, it's usually either unnecessary or insufficient; and logically, it's a tangled mass of contradictions. The goodness of the system is a long-standing article of faith among liberals, and major criticism of it was for years confined to the Barry Goldwaters of the political world (when Goldwater proposed the abolition of social security in his 1964 presidential campaign, it was considered a suicidal blunder ranking with his statement that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice"). But judged by liberals' rather than Goldwater's criteria—assuming, that is, that the government should act to help through old age and sickness those who need help—social security's stated virtues don't stand up to hard scrutiny.

Social security was conceived in compromise. It was a masterful piece of political sleight-of-hand by Franklin D. Roosevelt, designed to placate the left and the right. At the time that he sent social security legislation to Congress, in January 1935, Roosevelt was under great pressure to provide a stipend to the aged. A year earlier, an itinerant, elderly doctor-entrepreneur named Francis Townsend had set up an organization called Old Age Revolving Pensions, Limited, whose purpose was to pay people over 60 $200 a month if they would retire. A two-percent tax on business was to pay for the pension. The plan, Townsend said, would help the aged, reduce unemployment by opening up jobs for the young, and stimulate the economy by infusing cash into it.

The Townsend plan was financially impracticable—it would give the aged 60 per cent of the national income—but nonetheless it caught on. In towns across the country, people set up Townsend Clubs. Stores extended generous lines of credit to the elderly,

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on the assumption that the Townsend Plan's passage was imminent. Townsend claimed he had gathered 25 million signatures on petitions supporting the plan. Whatever the plan's flaws, it led old people to expect some support from the federal government. Roosevelt had to deliver.

At the same time, the right was unalterably opposed to a giveaway plan like Townsend's on the grounds that it would force the working population to support the non-working and destroy the dignity of those on the dole. So Roosevelt came up with a plan in which working people would pay money into a trust fund while they were working and then draw benefits out of the fund when they retired, proportional to their contributions. In theory, social security was not a giveaway program but a government-run insurance policy. The idea was that people would never set aside enough money for their retirement unless forced to do so, but that the money a retired person got out of the system was linked to the money he had put into it.

In fact this was not true—social security would pay the benefits of the old out of the wages of the young—and Roosevelt knew it. The system didn't work according to its stated economic logic, he once said, but social security taxes "were never a problem of economics. They are politics all the way through. We put those payroll contributions there so as to give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their pensions and their unemployment benefits. With those taxes in there, no damn politician can ever scrap my social security program."

Goods and Services

Since the New Deal, social security has grown and grown. Originally it covered only workers in business and industry; the tax was one per cent of the first $3,000 of a worker's annual earnings; and benefits went only to retired people or their survivors. Now social security includes agricultural and domestic workers, doctors and lawyers, railroad workers, military personnel, and most state and local government employees, whose participation is voluntary. The tax is at this writing 5.85 per cent on the first $16,500 of annual income, and it is going up this year. Benefits have increased greatly and are now tied to the cost of living; they go not only to the retired but to the disabled, dependents, and the elderly sick (Medicare is part of the system). Last year the Social Security Administration paid out $75 billion in cash benefits, making it by far the largest of the many government programs that give citizens goods and services.

For the last three years, the system has been losing money—about $3.2 billion last year. So far the losses have been paid for out of Social Security Administration reserves, but without any changes those reserves will run out in the early eighties and the government will have to pay for social security out of general revenues. That won't happen, because Congress passed a greatly increased social security tax last month that will pump money into the system, but the losses are frightening anyway. They have come about partly because when Congress tied the program's benefits to the inflation rate in 1972 it made a drafting error that gave some people, in effect, two sets of benefits increases for every rise in the cost of living. That can and will be corrected, but there's a longer-term and more important problem too: the population is getting older. The birth rate has been falling, and by the early part of the next century the children of the post-World War II baby boom will begin to glut the system. Because social security works by taking money from young workers and paying it to old retirees, it depends on the workers outnumbering the retirees. If that stops being the case, it's hard to imagine how the system will survive.

With the wolf thus at the door, it becomes easier to strip away the aura

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of good that envelops social security and examine it closely. Knowing we probably *can't* have social security for very much longer, it becomes possible to see that we also *shouldn't* have it. That doesn't mean we shouldn't help the aged poor, of course—Barry Goldwater notwithstanding, the idea of caring for people through the government is a worthy one. Social security just isn't the way to do it.

Regressive Taxation

As is becoming more widely understood, social security, rather than being a progressive form of insurance, is in fact a regressive form of taxation. Because it is financed through a flat percentage tax with an absolute upper limit, the poor pay a far greater percentage of their incomes into the system than the rich. Its benefits are based more on past contributions than on need, so they help the well-off more than the bad-off. Rich people tend to start working later than poor people and to live longer, so they also usually spend fewer years paying taxes to social security and more years receiving benefits.

Retired people lose their eligibility for social security benefits if they're still receiving a certain amount of earned income—but unearned income, such as stock dividends or insurance premiums, doesn't affect eligibility for benefits. This, again, helps the rich more than it does the poor, since the rich are most likely to be receiving unearned income in retirement. Another boon to the rich is that the tax on self-employed people is 7.9 per cent. At the moment, employees pay a 5.85 per cent tax out of their paychecks, and employers match their employees' contributions. This is supposed to ease the burden on working people and increase it for their bosses, but most economists agree that the worker actually pays both ends of the tax—employers figure in social security taxes as part of the cost of hiring an employee and deduct their half of the tax from an employee's pay. So the tax on the self-employed is lower than the real tax on those employed by others. This means a doctor really pays less into the system than a field hand, though in retirement he receives more.

For those who are annoyed by government deception, the fiction that social security is an insurance program is also an important strike against it. Milton Friedman, after reading the pro-social security literature put out by the government and others, was moved to say, "Men who would not lie to their children, their friends, or their colleagues, whom you and I would trust implicitly in personal dealings, have propagated a false view of social security—and their intelligence and exposure to contrary views make it hard to believe they have done so unintentionally and innocently."

Much effort goes into maintaining the fiction of insurance. Social security's regressive structure, for instance, apparently stays in place mainly because it seems to resemble the structure of an insurance plan, though the resemblance is only on the surface. This has obvious economic problems, of course, but it also helps keep social security from efficient performance in helping people, which is its real function. By trying so hard to hoodwink Americans into believing that the money they pay social security is money they'll get back one day, the government is passing up the chance to run a sensible relief program.

Seen as a relief program, social security is full of contradictions. The Social Security Administration insists that its benefits are a "floor" for retirement plans, not a living allowance. Many people do in fact live on their social security benefits, but they're forced to live close to the bone. Clearly the intention of the program, and its main good, is helping people who can't work and have no savings—but the government won't give those people a decent amount to live on. Meanwhile, people who do

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have sufficient nest eggs in their old age get benefits too, although they don't really need them. The rationale for this is that to get people to accept paying the taxes, the government has to guarantee them the benefits, but that seems like a high price to pay for the continuing acceptance of the program. It's now extracting taxes from people who can ill-afford to pay them, and giving benefits to people who don't need them, all in the name of disguising its real purpose. If the program is supposed to be for only people who need it, there's no reason to extend it to people who don't; if it's supposed to be for everybody, the omission of people like federal employees is unconscionable.

Accepting a Dole

The justification for social security is that people won't accept a dole—taxpayers will bridle at paying for it and recipients will feel degraded when they accept it. Therefore, the logic goes, it's imperative to make everyone paying social security taxes think they're laying aside money for themselves (which isn't true), and everyone receiving benefits think they're getting their own money back (also not true). That way, social security admits to servicing only one human frailty, which is people's natural disinclination to lay away sufficient money for the future. The idea is that most Americans will sheepishly admit they need to be forced to put money aside, but won't accept the idea that they should pay non-workers' living expenses.

That argument is the most plausible one standing in the way of the obvious solution to social security's problems: instead of tinkering with the taxes and benefits, just do away with its insurance disguise. If the real goal of the program is providing for old people who need money, provide them with that money, by the simplest possible formulas, according to need. Stop payments to the millions of people who don't really need the money. Increase payments up to a decent living level to the people who do need it. Abolish the social security tax and pay the bills out of general revenues from federal income tax. Although this might drive income taxes up slightly, the tax burden would be distributed more fairly than it is now, and a net gain in federal taxes would be extremely unlikely since so many needless benefit payments would be cut.

The Flaws of the Government

Just as this is an attractive solution to social security, it's also an attractive way of handling all the government's social-welfare programs. Right now, 157 federal agencies spend nearly $250 billion a year giving people money or services. The government subdivides people's needs with immense complexity, and no doubt with immense inefficiency, insufficiency, and overlap too. It pays hundreds of thousands of people to supervise the handing out of money. Just providing people with a guarantee that their income would always be at a certain level—and covering in addition major expenses like medical care—would be a much simpler and cheaper way to do it, and it would also, as Michael Nelson points out elsewhere in this issue, help lessen the hostility people feel toward federal bureaucrats.

Of course, one reason we don't have a guaranteed annual income is the flaws of the government. Welfare programs have been put together piecemeal; the self-protective urge of employees who administer them keeps them opposed to simplification; and the government often assumes it's better equipped to decide what citizens' financial needs are than the citizens are themselves, which is why it's reluctant to give them money outright. But most government social programs also share the fiction of social security—they're designed not to look like a dole, on the grounds that that's something neither the tax-

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payers nor the beneficiaries will stand for. A guaranteed annual income is seen as fundamentally inconsistent with the American—or even the human—character.

Practically, the drawbacks to a guaranteed income are that it would take away people's incentive to work and encourage employers to pay low wages, with the government making up the differences between low salaries and its minimum income. Those are easily dealt with, however. The minimum wage would prevent employers from cutting wages in response to the dole. From the workers' standpoint wages in America are sufficiently high—and the government's guarantee could be made sufficiently low—that the incentive to work would remain firmly in place. The amount of money it would take old people, probably the prime beneficiaries of a guaranteed income, to get by comfortably, is certainly not enough to tempt a younger worker with a family into a life of idleness.

Kindness and Dignity

So the really knotty doubts are abstract ones having to do with kindness and dignity. Are healthy working people kind enough to buy the explicit notion that they are supporting the old and infirm with their taxes, as opposed to having that fact hidden from them by the government, as is now the case? Is the dignity of the elderly such that they wouldn't accept payments they didn't feel they'd earned, as opposed, again, to having the truth hidden from them?

Certainly both notions, especially dignity, have changed a lot in America since the New Deal. Because the government has extended its benefits so broadly, to rich and poor alike, it's hard to believe there are many people left to whom the notion of getting a favor from Washington is shocking and repugnant. Executives at Lockheed know the government is paying their salaries, and farmers—if they're not fiercely independent, who is?—are trying to get the same deal. Similarly, most middle-class wage-earners already think they're supporting the less well off with some of their tax money, so the government's making that the explicit case would hardly be a great shock for them. And the dignity of young people who could find employment shouldn't be of prime concern here anyway—if receiving a guaranteed income is a little undignified for them, all the better, they'll have to think hard about choosing not to work. The dignity of the old and the needy is what's genuinely important.

Our Whole Concept

Changing social security is simple compared to changing our whole concept of income maintenance, but the concepts involved in both are similar. Real change would mean turning what the government now presents to us as a personal fact into a broader metaphor instead. The fact presented to us is that we're putting away money while we've got it to help ourselves later, when we need it. The metaphor would be that those of us who have a little money to spare should willingly give some of it up to help those of us who need money desperately.

This idea need not have any trappings of moral worth or lack thereof attached to it. Luck—the circumstances of birth and happenstances along the way—plays a huge part in life and greatly affects people's economic status. Some people are born rich or smart, and others aren't. People also make conscious choices that affect their material prosperity but not their personal quality—some people decide to be sculptors, and others decide to be bankers. The amount of money you have in old age isn't very much a product of how good you are.

If Americans can accept that they're part of a national community whose success each person cares about and has a stake in, a guaranteed income can work. If we see ourselves

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as each being responsible only to a community of one, then we have to stick with the present mess. Our leaders have to help us work this out, but they have to be willing to let us do much of the work ourselves.

Just reforming social security would be a major task. Imagine how a 55-year-old middle-class worker would feel about suddenly being told he wouldn't get the social security benefits he had been counting on because he doesn't need them. For 30 years, he has been carefully balancing his pension at work and his IRA account at the bank with the social security money he was sure he'd get, so as to guarantee a retirement that would be comfortable—with vacations and meals at good restaurants—instead of just adequate. Obviously his hostility to change would be immense.

Dozens of Others

To understand how difficult a guaranteed income would be to implement, add to that worker's hostility the hostility of dozens of other people: the veteran who sees his benefits as a reward for service to his country, the person just out of one job who expects generous unemployment benefits while looking for another, the welfare mother who is sure any change in her benefits from the Food Stamp and Aid to Families with Dependent Children programs will force her into total desperation.

So while social security reform is possible through conventional means, a guaranteed income certainly isn't. There would be too many people instinctively opposed to it—people who, if they're not convinced the idea is a good one, can stop it from becoming law. To persuade these people, we need a new approach to reform.

Usually, when a problem this tough confronts the nation, our political leaders think it's their responsibility to figure out the answer and talk everyone else—the Congress, the public—into accepting it. Thus President Carter deals with issues like energy or welfare reform by coming up with a cast-in-granite solution and then, through the hard sell of lobbying and speechmaking, trying to push it through. Carter isn't the only President to see this as the way to exercise leadership—when a politician is having trouble figuring out the answer to something, he is usually loath to admit it publicly and instead floats trial balloons so that the news of his uncertainty isn't made public. When this happens, newspaper readers start to notice that James Reston and Joseph Kraft are suddenly talking about, say, whether we should revive the draft, apparently apropos of nothing.

Politicians act this way partly because they think that to appear honestly undecided is to appear incompetent and partly because they view the country as made up of warring interests who will never agree on anything if left to themselves. But there are times when leaps of public opinion have to precede specific reforms, because those reforms can't succeed without them. An issue sometimes has to be thrown before the public unresolved, so that intelligent discussion can take place in the press, in classrooms, in speeches, and around dinner tables and new attitudes can start to emerge. The veteran has to decide for himself that somebody else really needs that benefit money more than he does; if the government decides for him, he won't accept it.

So Jimmy Carter ought to tell us what's wrong with the way we care for the needy—which it's clear he knows—and what might be done about it. I'm not going to commit myself to a program and then ask you to accept it, he should say. I'd like to know what the problems are and let you think and talk them over. I'll tell you what I think the answer might be, but if I'm wrong, tell me and I'll change my mind. That's the best way for us to move toward a new definition of generosity and self-respect —without being ordered to. ■

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Who's Who in the Carter Administration

When **Laurence Woodworth**, assistant secretary of the Treasury for tax policy, died last month, **President Carter** said that he had spent more time with Woodworth than with any other assistant secretary. That could have meant an hour or so, for Carter has very little contact with his sub-cabinet. There are no **Sumner Welleses** or **Adolph Berles**, or **Thurman Arnolds** with direct lines to the Oval Office that by-pass their superiors in the Cabinet. As we have often said, Carter is a believer in line authority. A recent example of just how much of a believer he is, is the case of a Cabinet member for whom Carter has the most modest esteem, **Brock Adams**. Officials from the Office of Management and Budget persuaded Carter that certain cuts should be made in the budget of the Department of Transportation. Instead of letting them make the cuts, Carter told them to go see Adams and persuade him to do the cutting. . . .The senators whose environmental records had been negatively rated by **Marion Edey** while she was chairwoman of the League of Conservation Voters have gotten back at her, as we feared, by rejecting her nomination to the White House Council on Environmental Quality. . . .**Peter Flaherty**, who has resigned as deputy attorney general to run for the Democratic nomination for governor of Pennsylvania will, if he wins, have as his likely opponent, **Richard L. Thornburgh**, acting deputy attorney general before Flaherty took over. **Griffin Bell**, by the way, did not try to persuade Flaherty to stay.

Appointments Since Our Last Issue:

COMMERCE

Assistant Secretary for Marine Programs—Andrew Manatos was legislative assistant to Senator **Thomas Eagleton.**

ENERGY

Administrator of the Energy Information Administration—Lincoln E. Moses has been a professor and dean of graduate studies at Stanford University and was on the executive committee of the Graduate Record Examination board. He served on the Environmental Pollution Panel of the President's Science Advisory Committee and is a member of the EPA's Environmental Health Advisory Committee.

Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Solar Application—Omi Walden was selected for this position when the Energy Department responded to criticism for not appointing enough women and minorities to top policy jobs. She was director of the Energy Resources office in Georgia.

HEW

Director, Health Standards and Quality Bureau—Helen Smits was vice-president for medical affairs of Georgetown University's Community Health Plan.

JUSTICE

Deputy Attorney General—Benjamin R. Civiletti was assistant attorney general for the criminal division.

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STATE

Ambassador to El Salvador—Frank J. Devine, a career foreign service officer, has been a political officer in Lisbon, deputy chief of mission in Santo Domingo and Caracas, and acting deputy assistant secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs.

Ambassador to Chile—George W. Landau has served as the State Department's country director for Spain and Portugal and is a former ambassador to Paraguay.

Ambassador to Bangladesh—David T. Schneider has been the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in New Delhi since 1973.

Ambassador to Burundi—Thomas T. Corcoran, a career foreign service officer, has held State Department posts in Spain, Vietnam, Haiti, and Canada, and has been deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Laos since 1976.

Ambassador to Greece—Robert J. McCloskey, a career diplomat, had been ambassador to the Netherlands for the past year. He was Kissinger's spokesman to the press.

TEACHERS

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Ambassador to Poland—William E. Schaufele got this job after being rejected by the Greek government as our ambassador there because, during testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he referred to the proximity of Greek islands to the coast of Turkey as "unusual." Greek officials felt that this indicated Schaufele's insensitivity to the tensions between Greece and Turkey.

TREASURY

Acting Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy—Donald C. Lubick was an assistant to the late **Laurence Woodworth**.

AGENCIES AND COMMISIONS

Civil Aeronautics Board

Chief Administrative Law Judge—Nahum Litt was an administrative law judge at the Federal Power Commission.

Environmental Protection Agency

Health Adviser to the Administrator—Dr. Roy Albert has been with the New York University Medical Center's Institute of Environmental Medicine. He is concurrently serving as chairman of EPA's carcinogen assessment group.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Member—George R. Hall has been an economist with the Rand Corporation. He was also deputy assistant secretary for Resource Analysis at the Defense Department and was a member of the Energy Policy and Planning Staff, Executive Office of the President.

Member—Georgiana H. Sheldon was an assistant to former Congressman **Rogers Morton** and was deputy director of the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency. She is a former acting chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission and was Deputy Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance at AID.

Member—Don Sanders Smith was an assistant professor of law at Emory University School of Law in Atlanta and has been a member of the Federal Power Commission since 1973.

Member—Matthew Holden, Jr. was a professor of political science at the

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University of Wisconsin and a member of the Wisconsin Public Service Commission.

National Council of the Arts

Member—Theodore Bikel, actor and folk singer, is president of Actors Equity, the entertainers' union.

Member—Maureen Dees is an official with the Southern Poverty Law Center in Alabama and one of the founders of the Montgomery Theatre Guild.

Member—Jacob Lawrence is a professor of art at the University of Washington in Seattle.

National Railroad Passenger Corporation Board (Amtrak)

Member—Anthony Haswell, a Chicago lawyer, organized the National Association of Railroad Passengers and was managing director for passenger services for the Rock Island Lines in Illinois.

Member—Ronald G. Nathan was a consulting attorney for the Interstate Commerce Commission who assisted communities with rail service problems.

Member—Charles Luna's appointment is a reappointment since he has served on the board since 1970. He is former president of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and the United Transportation Union.

Member—Harry T. Edwards of Ann Arbor, Michigan is a University of Michigan and Harvard University law professor who taught labor law and collective bargaining. He is a labor arbitrator and author of several books and articles.

Member—James R. Mills, a California state senator in San Diego, has been recognized for his efforts to improve passenger rail service in California.

Member—Frank Neel, from Thomasville, Georgia, is president of an air conditioning and heating firm working on electrical, mechanical, and solar energy innovation.

National Science Board

Member—Joseph M. Petit is president of the Georgia Institute of Technology, a Carter alma mater.

National Science Foundation

Assistant Director—James A. Krumhansl was a physicist for the Stromberg-Carlson Company and a physics professor at Brown and Cornell Universities.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Director of Public Affairs—Joan Larson Kelly was manager of public information for the Public Broadcasting Service and director of photography, publications, and graphics for the Peace Corps. She is a photojournalist and author of three books.

RESIGNATIONS, DEATHS AND WITHDRAWN NOMINATIONS

JUSTICE

Deputy Attorney General—Peter F. Flaherty, former Pittsburgh mayor, resigned to run for the governorship of Pennsylvania.

TREASURY

Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy—Laurence Woodworth died in Virginia after suffering a stroke at a tax conference in Williamsburg.

Deputy Comptroller of the Currency—Robert Bloom, who had endorsed **Bert Lance** before his Senate confirmation, has resigned.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Director—Frank M. Johnson, Jr. asked that his nomination be withdrawn. His doctor says Johnson is not recovering as rapidly as anticipated from recent abdominal surgery.

Federal Trade Commission

Member—Calvin J. Collier, who has been on the FTC since 1975, is a Republican. His departure will allow Carter to name a third Democrat to the five-member commission if he chooses.

Social Security Administration

Commissioner—James R. Cardwell will move to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, where he will be treasurer and vice-president for finance and administration.

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Memo of the Month

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
REGION IV — ATLANTA

TO : Title IX team (Unit II)

DATE: November 18, 1977

FROM : Carroll D. Payne
Coordinator, Title IX team

REFER TO:

SUBJECT: Routing of completed drafts of Title IX reports and letters.

The above drafts come to me first for review and I then give them to Mr. Gregory for typing. The typist returns them to Mr. Gregory for his record of typing completions. Mr. Gregory will return the typed copies to the originator to review for typing corrections and/or sign off. The originator, after corrections and sign off, will route the typed report or letter to me for sign off and routing to Mr. Clements. Copies of mailed letters come back through Mr. Gregory for recording.

HELP ELIMINATE WASTE HEW COST REDUCTION PROGRAM

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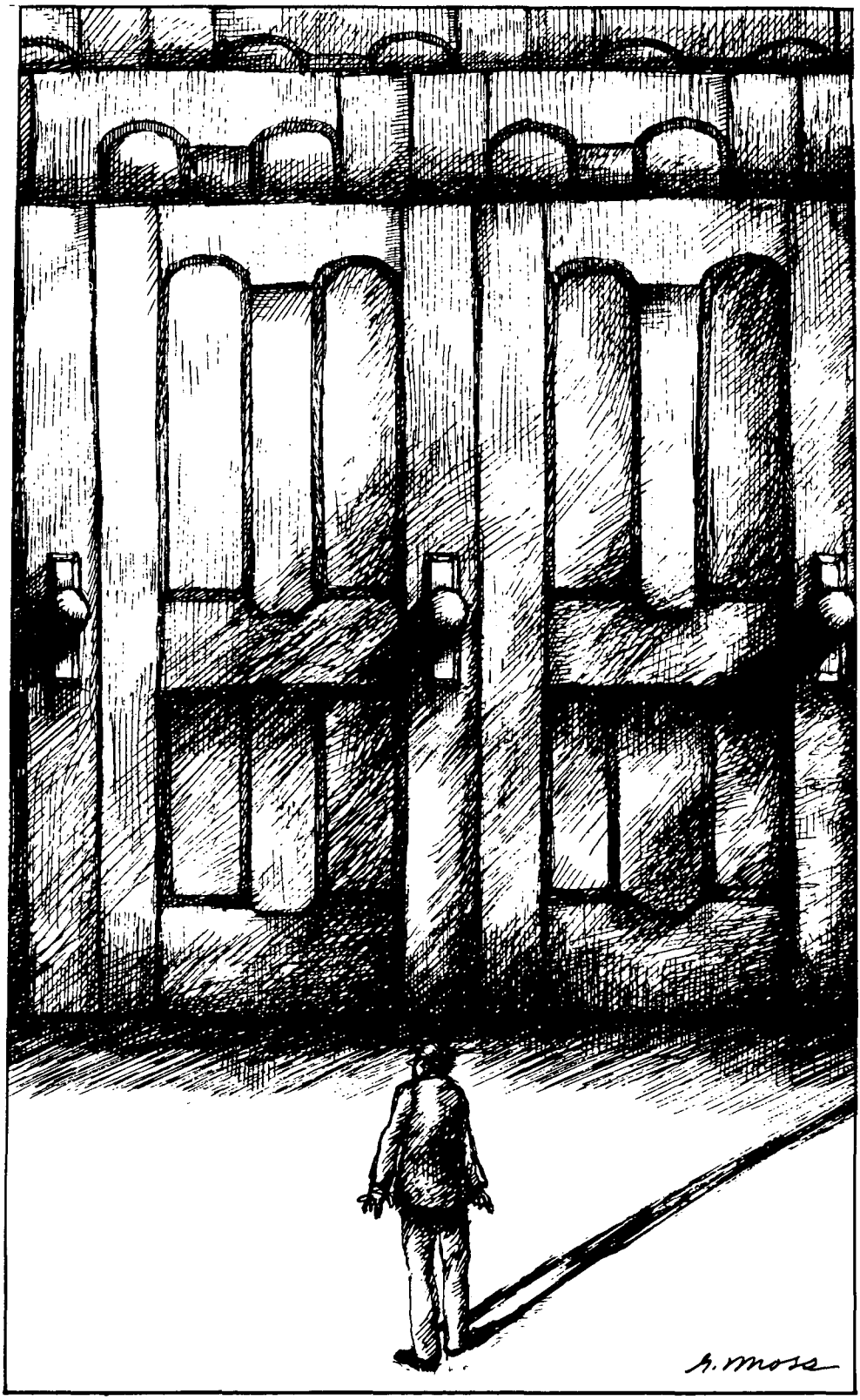

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Bureaucracy: The Biggest Crisis of All

by Michael Nelson

The hallmark of the company town is that it provides its people with not just jobs, but everything else, including entertainment. In Washington, of course, the bureaucracy is the company, and not surprisingly Washingtonians find its foibles to be an endless source of merriment. *The Washington Star* daily runs a "great moments in bureaucratese" feature called Gobbledygook; *The Washington Monthly* has its "Memo of the Month"; and Senator Proxmire grabs headlines with his monthly Golden Fleece Award, uncovering government-funded studies on "the sex life of the fern" and the like.

Washingtonians also seem to assume that if they are laughing at bureaucracy, the whole world must be laughing with them—when it's time for Americans to get serious about politics, they, like their brethren in Washington, surely must drop bureaucracy and start talking about "issues." But to the rest of the country, bureaucracy really isn't the least bit funny. It *is* the issue.

In fact it is not too much to say that out where the services of the government are delivered, the performance of the bureaucracy constitutes the biggest crisis facing our country today. It grows in each of the millions of direct, "routine" contacts that take place every day between citizens and the agencies of their government, many of which are supposed to be helping them. In contrast to Watergate and Vietnam, this crisis is neither readily identified nor easily cured; it is insidious, the more so because it manifests itself in such ordinary ways.

Bureaucracy isn't limited to government, of course, or to the United States. In China, it concerned Chairman Mao more than any other problem, enough so that he plunged his country into near-chaos in an attempt to deal with it. In this country we haven't had a Mao, and with any luck we will never need one, but we do have to recognize that the problem is as serious here as it was in China.

I began to find this out a couple of years ago, after I decided to try to learn what politics and government look like from a citizen's-eye view—what people think about when they think about the political system. I did so by going to three towns to talk with three classes of people—poor whites in Augusta, Georgia, professionals and businessmen in Towson, Maryland, and blue-collar workers in New Milford, New Jersey. I drew people's names randomly from the phone book, wrote to tell them I was

Michael Nelson is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly. *Douglas Goralski assisted in the research for this article.*

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interested in finding out what was on their minds concerning politics, and asked to come visit for a couple of evenings with them and a few of their friends and families. I didn't bring in a long list of questions; instead, when I got to their homes, I repeated my interest in hearing about their concerns, then sat back and listened as they talked, partly to me, but mostly with each other. Unlike a pollster, I was as interested in what people chose to talk about when they talked politics as in the specific opinions they expressed.

As the conversations rambled along, these people began to paint a verbal picture of the political world as they saw it. To my surprise, what loomed largest in that portrait was not presidents or elections or issues or the rest of the stuff we usually think of as "politics." In fact, when people spoke of current affairs and the like (mostly, I suspect, because they thought it would please me), they did so stiffly, with uncomfortable pauses and lags in the conversation. The subject they warmed to with raised-voice, table-thumping intensity was the bureaucracy—not the anonymous, bloated, big-B Bureaucracy of Chamber of Commerce after-dinner speeches, but rather the specific agencies of government they felt intruding into their personal lives.

As one might expect, each class of people dealt with somewhat different groups of agencies—the well-off with, for example, the IRS, the blue-collar families with the unemployment office, the poor with the Social Security Administration. But regardless of their class, almost all saw little connection between political issues and their own lives. They saw a great deal of connection, however, between bureaucracy and their daily concerns—and most of what they saw they didn't like.

Further, they didn't like that intimacy, those intrusions. It meant dealing with organizations that were not only large and impersonal, but whose actions sometimes seemed to defy all reason. For example, Frank, a prosperous middle-aged lawyer, told of trying to find out from the IRS how his purchase of a condominium would bear on his taxes. "I went all the way to the IRS district director before I could get anybody to listen to what I was saying. The district director finally says, 'Well, I can't help you; you have to talk to the agent of the day'—you know, call a number and agent so-and-so answers. So when I finally reach him, he says, 'Does your company subscribe to Prentice-Hall and Commerce Clearinghouse and different tax services?' I said yeah. He says, 'Well, you better look it up there because that's more help than we can give you.' "

Martha, a retired spinster, had been supporting herself with a small social security check. Ordinarily, that would have entitled her to get additional Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. But because she had saved over the years for her burial, she told me, she had accumulated more in the bank than SSI recipients were allowed to have. Thus, the local office turned down her application, though a sympathetic caseworker advised her that if she went out and spent her savings, she would become eligible.

Random and Arbitrary

Bureaucrats' behavior also seemed random and arbitrary, though for those who were shrewd enough, it could be gotten around. A real estate dealer explained that "It's very difficult to get the right information out of the government in my business. Trying to get a decent appraisal out of a government official—the VA or the FHA—is unbelievable. The red tape. If he appraised it, that's the last word—that's it. And the only way we could rectify two of the things that came in grossly underappraised was to go to our congressman, who used to be a neighbor. He helped us out."

All too often, though, an inept agency action gave the appearance of

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being malicious. Curiously, many of the poor whites were certain that the government now discriminated against them, using evidence like Homer and Viola's. "I know a black man who used to work at the truckstop," complained Homer, a young part-time school janitor. "His wife went down there and said him and her was separated and had two young 'uns. And at that time she's been drawing welfare and food stamps for two years and she said they never had so much as come to her house." "And that woman came down here and went through every cabinet I got, that welfare woman," added Viola.

'In 30 Days I'd be Starving'

For some, the inherently complicated nature of bureaucratic procedures was a source of anger and confusion. After Willie's husband Fred, a mechanic, broke his arm, she went down to the food stamp office. "I had a note from the doctor saying he'd have to stay out of work for ten months. They told me I could get the stamps but I'd have to wait 30 days. I told her that in 30 days I'd be starving and she could forget about it." Ron, an unemployed landscaper, dreaded going down to the unemployment office. "You have to get on one line for this and another line for that, and the people behind the counter—they're busy, I know—but they treat you like you're probably a rip-off artist or something. You know, guilty until proven innocent."

The impersonal nature of agency contacts further incensed people. Diana, a university press editor, complained about "the computerized courtesy" of form letters from the IRS: "We got a letter saying come down to the IRS at such-and-such a time, blah, blah, blah, and bring all your papers—very impersonal.

"So we go down and it turns out that nothing is wrong. Well, Good Lord, I've been paying taxes for 30 years and nothing's ever been wrong. Why do they need to call me now? Just more big brother."

Even worse was having to rely on a large, anonymous, and hence unpredictable organization for basic sustenance. Gene and Ella, who live off his VA disability payments, got very upset when some bureaucrat waited too long to get the checks out. "If a man is depending on that check," said Gene, "he could be sitting out in the street with his family maybe for ten days if his landlord wants his rent on the first. You can get pretty hungry from the first to the tenth waiting for that check, and they should take that into consideration. Some of them wait until the last minute and foul everybody up, and it can be real costly to people."

What is striking about these complaints, and the scores of similar ones I heard, is not that people don't like bureaucracy. After all, who does? I once taught a course in public administration to a class of government employees, and even they couldn't muster up a kind word for it.

The Nature of the Complaints

What is striking is the nature of the complaints. As every scholarly treatise on the subject will tell you, the great advantage bureaucracy is supposed to offer to complex, modern society is efficient, rational, uniform, and courteous treatment for the citizens it deals with. Yet not only did these qualities manage to conceal themselves from the people I talked with, it was their very opposites that seemed more characteristic. People of all classes felt that their treatment had been bungled, not efficient; unpredictable and bizarre, not rational; discriminatory or idiosyncratic, not uniform; and all too often, insensitive or downright insulting rather than courteous. It was as if they had gotten stuck with a new car that not only did not run when they wanted it to, but that periodically started itself up and drove all around their lawn.

Equally curious, the agencies that drew the most fire were, on the

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whole, those whose business is supposedly providing benefits to people —social security, food stamps, welfare, tax counseling, and so on. It is not surprising, of course, that people grumble when the government exacts taxes and other burdens from them. But when in the process of supposedly doing something for them it makes them hopping mad, then we have a problem.

Spanning Party Lines

This last point is underscored in a recent report to Jimmy Carter from Richard Pettigrew, a presidential assistant working on reorganization. Pettigrew sent out a letter to every representative and senator asking them which federal programs their constituents thought were "administered least efficiently," "most confusing," "least successful in achieving their stated objectives," involved the most "excessive paperwork," and, finally, were "most responsive." Though congressmen, who are at the receiving end of almost all citizen complaints against the government, were the logical ones to ask, evidently no one ever had before. More than 200 of them replied, often in great detail. Their answers, interestingly enough, were quite uniform, spanning party and ideological lines. (The author of a call for "less government involvement in the 'daily lives' of individuals and businesses," for example, was George McGovern.)

Two agencies ranked high in all four "bad" categories: the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, which administers the black lung program and workmen's compensation for federal employees, and the Social Security Administration. (It is worth remembering here that the agency's old age insurance program seemed to work fine; it was the disability insurance, Medicare, and Aid for Families with Dependent Children that drew all the flak.)

The Veterans' Administration was next on the list; it scored badly in three categories. The IRS, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Small Business Administration showed up in two. Among the others that were singled out frequently: the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Civil Service Commission, the Farmers Home Administration, the Postal Service, the Economic Development Administration, and the Employment Retirement Income Security Administration.

Aside from the IRS and, perhaps, OSHA, all of these are, supposedly, benefits agencies. The patterns of complaints Pettigrew found—unnecessary delays in processing cases, agencies' failure to provide people with information, and "outright rudeness"—were very similar to the ones I heard.

Clearly, then, the message Americans are sending—that they feel and resent the weight of government agencies pressing in on their personal lives—is an urgent one; with the benefit of hindsight, it becomes obvious that they have been trying to get it through for some time. It was expressed at Jimmy Carter's town meetings and phone-ins, for example (not to mention his election itself)—in the plea for help from a Cleveland woman who couldn't get her mother's GI Bill benefits straightened out, the complaint of a Lanham, Maryland job-seeker that she had been frozen out of civil service employment, the California man's protest about letters the Post Office takes forever to deliver, and so on. And, most obvious, there is all that congressional mail.

'Dear Abby'

Unfortunately, the message generally has been ignored. Though Carter described his town meetings as "a learning process rather than a teaching process," the White House seemed more excited about the public relations benefits of being seen listening

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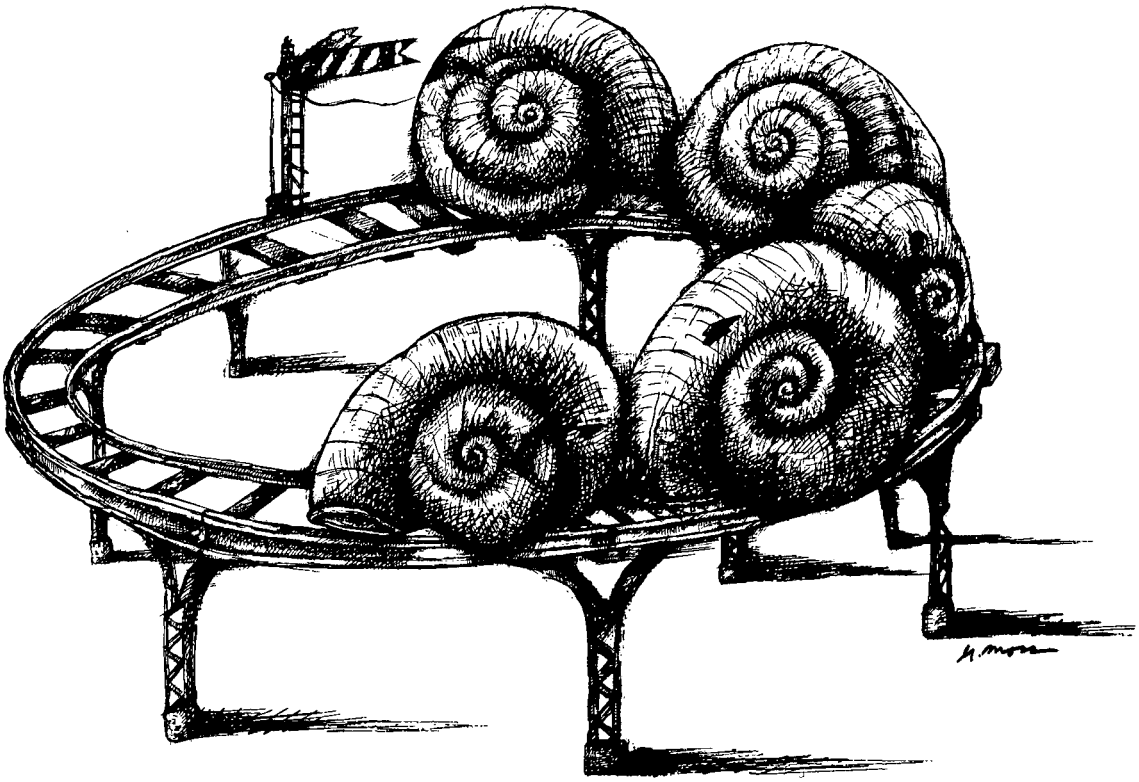

to people than the listening itself. The press was alternately miffed and condescending. *Time*, for example, thought the questions asked at the televised phone-in in Los Angeles were "either soft or silly"; columnist Joseph Kraft said the radio program that started it all was "a set of 'Dear Abby' phone calls to the President."

Similarly, though congressmen respond vigorously to the specific complaints of their constituents, they rarely dig deeper to discover the patterns of agency practice that underlie them. In most congressional offices, the legislative staff almost never tries to learn anything from the casework staff, which handles complaints (in fact, there's a powerful status difference between the two, and snobbery often keeps the high-status legislative assistants from even talking to the lowly caseworkers). Putting out fires as they occur translates into votes; finding out why so many fires take place, though, would be not only long and tedious, but difficult to dramatize to the folks back home as well.

Thus, Pettigrew blandly reports, "even the offices of those senators and congressmen with legislative responsibilities for various programs acknowledge the acute need for administrative reform. The office of Senator Harrison Williams, for example, was extremely critical of the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, calling the program 'unresponsive, unorganized, and insensitive.' " Representatives John Dent, Phillip Burton, and William Ford were among those equally critical. As all four gentlemen are, and have been for some time, influential members of the congressional committees that are responsible for the OWCP (Williams is chairman of the Senate Labor Committee; Dent, Burton, and Ford are senior Democrats on House Education and Labor), they obviously bear some of the responsibility for the OWCP's shortcomings. Yet, like most of their col-

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leagues, they have found it easier just to slam away at an agency than to do whatever is necessary to improve it.

'No Jobs'

Congress not only fails to correct a lot of the problems citizens have with government; it creates a good many of them by writing bad laws. Senator Lawton Chiles' complaint to Pettigrew that many people's SSI payments go down dramatically whenever their VA benefits go up can be traced to a problem in the law, not the agencies. As a VISTA volunteer representing people at social security hearings, I frequently heard vocational experts testify that my clients should be turned down for disability benefits because they were healthy enough to do sit-down jobs like those at a local Borden's plant. The fact that Borden's had had a "no jobs" sign in the window for as long as anyone could remember was irrelevant; the fact that it was irrelevant was due to the way Congress had written the law.

None of this should be taken to mean that agencies are blameless or that there is nothing they could do to make things more pleasant for the people they deal with. For example, the IRS set up a toll-free number that citizens could call for help with their taxes. Fine. But according to Senator William Proxmire, the line is almost always busy during tax season, for 23 consecutive days in one case. Why offer a service and not deliver it? OSHA made it a practice to concentrate its fire on small businesses rather than large ones; where is the sense in that? And what is the justification for outright rudeness in any situation?

Social Security disability hearings again provide an extraordinary case in point. The agency is notorious for having more than half its determinations that applicants are ineligible for disability benefits or SSI overturned if appealed—usually by its own administrative law judges. What is worse, many congressmen reported, in the four to eight months it takes to get a favorable decision, people have lost their homes, spent hundreds of dollars on lawyers, even died. When I asked Michael Naver at Social Security why local bureaucrats made so many wrong determinations in the first place, he pointed out that "the hearing is the first time anyone in the Administration actually sees the applicant—physically sees how he moves, how he talks, how he copes, and so on. Until then, we're just looking at a file." Again, common sense—never mind human decency and courtesy—would seem to cry out for a change in administrative practice here.

As with poor congressional law drafting, obvious deficiencies like these could be remedied with a little more care and concern; for that reason alone they are probably worth reforming. But if bad guys and bad practices were all that there was to the problem, such tinkering with the machinery—the usual activity of reformers—would be all it would take to solve it.

Unfortunately, the problem is far more fundamental than that. It is basic to bureaucracy, built into the relationship between citizens and government in a democratic welfare state. It lies in the simple difference in perspective between agency and citizen, a difference that makes it difficult if not impossible for the two to deal in a mutually satisfactory way. Perhaps it can be best understood by starting with the desk that lies between them.

Of Course

On one side of the desk is the citizen, a unique individual with a unique set of circumstances. Think of Martha, the woman who, because she had saved for so many years for her burial, had more money in the bank than the SSI law allowed its beneficiaries to have. She is, of course, a whole person, and wanted to be treated as a whole person. Special consideration? Of course. Bend the rules a little? Certainly; I'm different. And she is different, as is every other

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person who sits on her side of the desk.

Across from her is the bureaucrat. He is there not as a friend or neighbor, but purely as the hired representative of his agency. As much as possible, that agency is supposed to execute the law as written, that is, to function as an efficient machine. It's not supposed to do whatever it—or one of its employees—wants, or feels is right. That means the bureaucrat, sitting as he does at the bottom of the agency ladder, must function as a cog in that machine. He is empowered only to do certain limited things, and only for those clients who are eligible. By definition, he must not look at the whole person, but only those features that enable him to transform her into a "case," a "file." His first job, then, is to fit this woman before him into a category: eligible or not; if so, for what and on what terms. Once classified, she becomes subject to the same treatment as all the others in her category.

Consider the Alternative

So Martha did not get her SSI check. The fact that her savings are for burial purposes, not high living, could not even be considered. If that sounds horrible, consider the alternative: bureaucrats with the discretion to waive the law at their option. One would like to think they would do so for good-hearted purposes, but our experience with government is that agencies that are free to exercise the most discretion in applying the law—the regulatory boards, contracting agencies, even judges sentencing criminals—tend to use that discretion in ways that harm, not help, the average man. As bad as machine bureaucracy is, the obvious alternative is worse.

Even good intentions can't do very much about this fundamental problem of perspective, as I learned from my experience in a legal aid office in Atlanta. Everyone who worked there was zealously dedicated to "serving the people;" their long hours at low

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. . . for a new writer for our staff, and we'd like to invite any of our readers who are interested to apply for the job. The hours are long and the pay low, but the work—about half writing **Washington Monthly** articles, and half editing them—is interesting and it's a good stepping-stone for a career in journalism. Past holders of this job have gone on to work at **Harper's, The New Yorker, The New Republic, The Manchester Guardian, The Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal,** and the White House staff.

We have no set requirements for the job; we're looking for somebody with intelligence and a sense of humor who can write and edit well and is interested in politics. If this sounds appealing, send us a letter about yourself and some long samples of your writing, preferably showing both fact-gathering and analytical ability. Our address is 1028 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

THE EDITORS

The Washington Monthly also has unpaid internships available to graduate and undergraduate students who are interested in gaining experience in the circulation, promotion, editorial, production, and graphics phases of magazine publishing.

We accept interns throughout the year, but require a minimum of six weeks' service. Applicants should write, explaining why they want to work at **The Washington Monthly**, enclosing a resume and listing the names of two people who have taught or supervised them. Mail to Intern Program at the above address.

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pay proved that. We thought of ourselves as the anti-bureaucracy agency, tilting against the local welfare, food stamp, social security, and VA offices on behalf of our clients.

The Good Guys and the Bad Guys

Thus, I was amazed to learn that many poor people regarded us as just another bureaucracy—couldn't they tell the good guys from the bad guys? But they were right. We, too, had our eligibility requirements, kept them waiting in the outer office, got impatient when they didn't keep to our schedules or rambled off the subject. We didn't look at them as whole people any more than our fellow federal employees in the other agencies did.

So what is to be done?

First, although there are limits to what we can do to change bureaucracy, there are ways we can cut it down to size, minimizing the number and complexity of contacts between citizens and agencies. For instance, the vast array of government programs designed to give people sustenance (welfare, disability, social security, unemployment, veterans pensions, workmen's compensation, food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid) really are addressed only to two simple needs: the need for money to live on, and the need to pay for health care. A guaranteed annual wage (with poverty the only measure of eligibility) and a national health care system would take care of those needs far more simply than the present system, and because of the simplicity, at a reduced cost. Caring for people through outright handouts would also vastly reduce that grating citizen-bureaucrat contact. The advantage of this shines through in the experience of the Social Security Administration. The administration of the old-age pension, whatever you might say about its conception, is simple and popular—I heard almost no complaints about it and neither did the congressmen who reported to Pettigrew. It was the highly complicated SSI, disability, and welfare programs that spawned all sorts of problems.

One reason this kind of simplicity isn't more widespread is that the government's intentions are, in a way, too good—we can't bear to give away money without making sure it's well deserved. Any small-town mayor can tell you that if he wants federal money for some well-deserved project, he has to put up with reams and reams of forms and meetings designed to insure that the construction company doesn't discriminate in its hiring, that the plans are perfectly sound, that the environmental impact of the project won't be adverse, and so on. These are all worthy goals, but they create a lot of bitterness and kill a lot of projects. Sometimes it's better for the government just to take a deep breath and *give* away the money, trusting its recipient to spend it in reasonable ways and accepting that there will be some who won't.

What Cannot be Eliminated

Of course, any simplification will still leave a lot of bureaucracy standing, so it's important to try to reform what bureaucracy cannot be eliminated. The press can play a large role in this, by giving its audience a running commentary on what parts of the government work, what parts don't, and why, so that we can apply the lessons elsewhere. It certainly doesn't do that now—at the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, they kept waiting for the flock of reporters to descend when Pettigrew's report came out, but nobody called. Exposing Watergates is fine, but these days lawbreaking is the least of the government's problems.

But most of the burden of dealing with these problems should be shouldered by the government itself. For one thing, we need to teach as well as learn about how bureaucracy works in this country. Our present system of civics education in the public schools, sticking as it does to explications of a

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constitution that doesn't even mention the bureaucracy, tells people almost nothing about how to make agencies work for them. I would bet that for every thousand people in this country who could list the Bill of Rights and name all nine Supreme Court justices, you would be lucky to find one who could explain his rights against federal agencies and name the members of even one regulatory commission. Because we don't teach these things, we shouldn't be surprised that people feel ignorant and overwhelmed when they have to deal with as many agencies as they do.

Growing Means Listening

Elected officials also need to learn more than they do, and in a democracy learning means listening. Most politicians do this chiefly by taking polls, but pollsters get their answers by asking people questions about the things the pollsters (or more precisely, the people who hire them) think are important. As a result, we end up with reams and reams of data about what grandma thinks about the Panama Canal, assuming she cares enough to have an opinion, and nothing at all about what is on *her* mind. Forums like Jimmy Carter's phone-ins, where the citizens themselves decide what to talk about, would be far more educational for Washingtonians who venture out into the bush than the latest Caddell poll.

Listening, learning, and reading are only the first steps, of course; the government has also to act to make itself work better. Now and then proposals for accomplishing this come forth, usually involving some sort of "ombudsman" agency. But a new spirit is at least as important as a new agency; in fact, the Office of Management and Budget in the executive branch and the General Accounting Office in the legislative could, under their charters, do as much investigating of the government as anyone could want, but they don't. The point is to care enough about the government's grating inefficiencies to attack them with passion.

Mostly Absent

That passion is mostly absent today because criticism of big government is the exclusive province of the right, which doesn't want social welfare programs in the first place. So proposals to meet the bureaucratic problem head-on usually involve throwing out the baby with the bath—getting rid not only of the bad apparatus but also of the good program it's supposed to implement.

In fact, the bureaucracy crisis is an ideal issue for liberals, who *want* the government to meet the major problems of the nation. As Pettigrew's study showed, popular dissatisfaction with government stems from its failure to deliver on promised services, not from the regulatory ills you see detailed in the Mobil Oil ads. A 1976 survey by Potomac Associates found that Americans—even self-described conservatives—want the government to do more to help the elderly, make college available to young people, reduce air pollution, improve health care, and so on. Liberals need not worry that any concession to critics of bureaucracy is an invitation to reaction—the New Deal has already been ratified.

If anything does set off a wave of right-wing, anti-government fervor, it will be the failure of liberals to see to it that the government Americans want need not be gargantuan or staggeringly complex, and must be delivered efficiently and courteously. Over the years, liberals have responded to popular demands with an impressive set of promises; now they must be willing to deliver on them. It will be a huge effort—Mao, after all, started a "cultural" revolution toward that end, and even that was only partially successful. But if the effort isn't made, the mood of sullen resentment I found in the people I talked with eventually will turn to angry action. And when it does, expect the worst. ■

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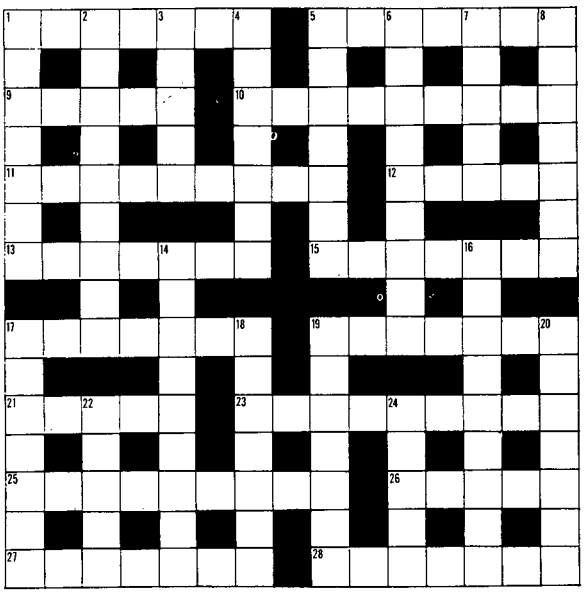
the political puzzle

by John Barclay



ACROSS

1. Sad time around this area in the news. (7)
5. City finishes fourth after butler comes back. (3,4)
9. Discredited official in stag newspaper. (5)
10. Riots about Dior dress. (9)
11. Me treed in new way to decide. (9)
12. What could be heard in United States in 1099? (5)
13. Old car writes for looks anew. (7)
15. Spot box for movie thriller. (3,4)
17. Creeps around to a joint to get confidence. (7)
19. Fig fare make it stick its neck out. (7)
21. A 49'er in sly formation makes no sense. (5)
23. Under cans we find the Kid? (9)
25. High-liver displays fourth ear. (3,6)
26. Movie actress in sleight of hand trick. (5)
27. Legislative body in darkness—Ethiopian style. (7)
28. There's a catch in Christmas returning for this country. (7)

DOWN

1. Dear men move aimlessly around. (7)
2. Receipts from activist states? (9)
3. What Sadat puts first in Egyptian warehouse. (5)
4. Goodies after tea: it bids somehow. (7)
5. Teachers sometimes pull together rest set. (7)
6. See Mary drool over London VIP. (4,5)
7. See wives made up. (5)
8. Duct found in shelves I cleared out. (7)
14. Each one's verse many turned around. (9)
16. Weird fit on face causes tenderness. (9)
17. When rockets run short, shake them up? (7)
18. Put cap down, put it up in front of street, you've got it! (3,4)
19. Ungrateful daughter is girl one confused. (7)
20. Organ time composed of baked clay? (7)
22. Regal arrangement won't be missed. (5)
24. Sixty-one in degree is not planned. (2,3)

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word. Answers to last month's puzzle are on page 64.

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Richard Reeves on Political Books

Sometime in the late 1960s, when I was the City Hall bureau chief of *The New York Times*, I worried that I was making a big mistake by not going to Vietnam. As a reporter; I was already in my thirties, beyond the reach of Selective Service. I was afraid that if I didn't do my two years there, if I didn't know what it was like, that I wasn't going to be able to understand the America of my generation.

I was wrong, of course. What happened between 1965 and 1972 happened here, at home. If I hadn't figured that out before, it certainly became clear reading the galleys of two books to be published early this year: *On Press* by Tom Wicker, which will be published in February by Viking Press (an excerpt appears on page 8); and *Chance and Circumstance* by Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, which will be published by Alfred A. Knopf in April.

For me, two volumes could not have been more different than these. One familiar; the other uncomfortably strange, kind of frightening. Even though he is 12 years older than I, Wicker could have been writing the story of my life: ambitious kid works his way up from smalltown weekly to *The New York Times* and baffling influence, then tries to figure out what it means. Baskir and Strauss, respectively, the general counsel and planning director of President Ford's Clemency Board, have written about the trauma of the 27 million American men three to seventeen years younger than I, the generation that fought, or did not fight, in Vietnam.

Richard Reeves is the author of Convention. *His column is a regular feature of* The Washington Monthly.

Chance and Circumstance is a rather dry book, filled with statistics and case studies, but almost every page stunned me. Where the hell was I?

I was in the press—doing quite well, thank you. So was Wicker, and Vietnam is at the heart of his book about what he's learned in 30 successful years. "Years," he writes, "in which the practice of journalism itself would be greatly altered, with even the hallowed traditions of 'objectivity' beginning to yield—if slowly—to a new and less cautious ethic of disclosure."

There are insights in *On Press* —maybe "tips" is a better word—and two should be repeated because sources and reporters never seem to get them right. First: "Nothing is ever finally off the record if it's said within hearing of a reporter." Last: "Over the years, with considerable hesitation and owing to the bitter experiences of having been both too far in and too far out, I think more often than not—something on the order of eight cases out of ten—the news source needs the reporter more than the reporter needs the source."

At his best, Wicker is writing about our detachment, our disengagement, the pride and the shame of it. "Audiences," he says, "sometimes react in disbelief when I insist that I am not trying as a columnist to achieve anything other than the intellectual stimulation of readers. But it's true."

Yes, it is, dammit. "Come on, Mr. Wicker! March with us, Mr. Wicker!" the kids yelled to him in Chicago in 1968. "March, Mr. Wicker! Put up or shut up!"

But he only wrote: "So I stood there a while longer, and the picketers went on past, until those who had

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called to me were far up the avenue; and in the wilting heat I felt sad and old and out of shape. I had believed always that I belonged with the young and the brave and the pure in heart; but in the end I got into my rented car and went on out to the Stockyards and up to the press gallery."

Not all the young men were brave or pure in heart. What they were was just young, which meant they could be drafted and some would die in Vietnam. Very few—less than 0.02 per cent of them—were going to die. Perhaps that was the key, the unfairness—Why me, when 99.98 percent will live? That is why the generation of Americans behind me has labels—sucker, opportunist, evader, deserter.

There are no heroes in *Chance and Circumstance*, but it is one of the best books to come out of this war or any war. In the end, it could be the most important one because it goes a long way toward explaining what happened at home, how, once young men began being drafted for an undeclared, unjustified war, the nation was almost inevitably torn apart.

The villain is the draft system itself and its autocratic though perhaps well-meaning architect, General Lewis Hershey. Beginning in 1947, Hershey had deliberately put together a system—"channeling"—designed not to fight a war, but "to strengthen the Nation's civilian economy and to foster the family life of the Nation." The system, essentially totalitarian, would determine, in his words, "whether a man is more valuable as a father or student or scientist or doctor than as a soldier." Haunted by England's loss of its leadership class on the battlefields of World War I, Hershey concluded that he had the responsibility to preserve America's potential elite with an incredibly complex series of deferments—he would decide who should live and who should die.

Not surprisingly, the generation almost randomly selected to test Hershey's theories resisted, evaded and deserted. But not without paying a price—not so much because of the uncertain enforcement of the draft laws as the scorn of their uncomprehending countrymen.

As political science, *Chance and Circumstance* is an extraordinary case study of the unexpected effects of government policy. As recent history, it is a convincing explanation of the bond between the children of the sixties and an education for someone like me who was not one of them.

There is just too much in the book to cite here. The impact of the data and individual case studies is cumulative. The authors not only had access to the Pardon Board's proceedings and records but, with the backing of Notre Dame University and the Ford Foundation, conducted two surveys of draft-age men. Suffice it to say that the second survey of 1,586 men in Indiana, Michigan, and Washington, D.C., reads like 1,586 tragedies—and the sadness doesn't depend on whether a man went to war or ran.

While I was reading the galleys, I asked a 29-year-old friend why he did not go to Vietnam. He said he had faked back troubles to win a 4-F deferment. Didn't that deception bother him? No, he said, he was too scared and too selfish. But then he said he wanted to write about it to explain why, to make people understand. . . .

I understand now, I think. After talking with other younger men, I understand, too, that draft-age men could not share their experience very well with older people—either because their elders didn't seem to understand or because the young men were ashamed of what they were doing. Political views aside, the false evaders decided to allow others to serve in their place.

Finally, reading *On Press* and *Chance and Circumstance*, I'm forced to ponder the limits of journalism. At his most powerful, Tom Wicker can only say that Vietnam made him feel lousy one afternoon—that's about the usual price reporters pay for a view of other people's agony. ■

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political book notes

Public affairs books to be published in January

Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy. James C. Mohr. Oxford, $12.50.

Above the Battle: War-Making in America from Appomattox to Versailles. Thomas C. Leonard. Oxford, $12.95.

The Adoption Triangle: The Sealed Record Controversy. Arthur Sorosky, M.D., et al. Doubleday, $8.95.

American Nightmare: Indian Treaties. C. Herb Williams, Walt Neubrach. Outdoor Empire Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box C-19000, Seattle, WA 98109, $3.75.

Autobiography of Values. Charles A. Lindbergh. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $12.95. He was America's last hero before the Great Depression first cracked our self-confidence. Lucky Lindy, the Lone Eagle—we loved him for his daring, for his modesty in the face of adulation few people have known, and we grieved with him and his wife at the murder of their kidnapped son.

And then as World War II approached, our love affair with Lindbergh ended. His advocacy of American non-intervention, his admiration for the German Luftwaffe and his unfortunate affinity for people of the far right with whom these positions brought him into association became increasingly unpopular as passions mounted. Even now, none of the explanations he offered quite clears the air.

Yet one reads the pages of this posthumous book with growing astonishment at the complexity of the man. Beyond his great contributions to aviation—not only was he the founding father of transcontinental passenger service (and what became TWA), but it was he who arranged the financing of Robert Goddard's rocketry experimentation, which opened the way to the jet and space age—he had an enormous interest in the mysteries of life itself. Fascinated by the work of the French surgeon, Alexis Carrel (also, alas, of suspect political leanings) in keeping disembodied organs alive, Lindbergh spent five years designing and perfecting an organ-perfusion apparatus, the design of which is still in use today. He experimented with lowering the body temperatures of mice, guinea pigs—and himself—as he pondered whether some day we would freeze people to extend their longevity for intergalactic travel.

With America at war, he fretted because he now had to spend his time on programs "to shorten life, not lengthen it." His hatred for war vibrates with fervor and the destructive power of aviation makes him question the value of his labors in its development. "Through epochs past," he notes, "nature has used the killing of individuals in a selection that advanced life's species, but no selection resulted from man's atomizing of his cities or by the downwind fallout that ensued." An ardent environmentalist, he brooded, too, that civil technology vied with the military in breaking down human health and the natural environment.

Lindbergh's aversion to acclaim was palpable: "I found it difficult to work and think in the spotlight of newspaper publicity. I began to realize that as one gains fame one loses life. Life meant more to me than fame."

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Just as real was his contempt for shoddy commercialism. He could easily turn down an offer of $50,000 to endorse a certain cigarette (He didn't smoke–but he was offered a free pack so he could *truthfully* say he smoked that brand), and with only a twinge of regret, more than half a million dollars to star in a film.

The man had class. In a day when former senators ("I'm jes an ole country lawyer . . . ") and knighted Shakespearean actors become TV pitchmen for credit cards and cameras, you will find it refreshing to reacquaint yourself with even a fallen hero of yesteryear.

–Leonard Reed

Blue Jolts: True Stories from the Cuckoo's Nest. Charles Stair. New Republic Books, $8.95.

Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance. Elihu Katz, George Wedell. Harvard, $15.

Coming of Middle Age: A Journey. Arnold J. Mandell, M.D. Summit, $7.95.

Commissioner: A View From the Top of American Law Enforcement. Patrick V. Murphy, Thomas Plate. Simon & Schuster, $9.95.

Corporate Power and Urban Crisis in Detroit. Lynda Ann Ewen. Princeton, $17.50.

The Death of Capital. Stephen Harris. Pantheon, $8.95. Talk about tilting at windmills! In his maiden book, Harris sets out to one-up Karl Marx *and* demolish capitalism.

"Marx's scenarios for its (capitalism's) downfall are unconvincing. His theories cannot comprehend the full complexity of capitalist decay."

And so Harris offers his own scenario.

Capitalism is devouring the earth's natural resources at a suicidal rate: annually, for every man, woman, and child in the United States, we use up 1,200 pounds of iron and steel, 7,800 pounds of petroleum, 5,000 pounds of coal, 5,000 pounds of natural gas. No consideration of future needs enters into our production other than the groundless assurance that technology will solve arising shortages. Concurrently, through pollution of soil, water, and air, we are headed for ecological bankruptcy. As conventional capital increases, biological capital declines.

Reckless competition ordained this ruinous course, but the monopoly that is replacing competition (*Fortune*'s 500 corporations account for two-thirds of the industrial sales of the entire country) is no solution. On the contrary, huge monopolies use their political power to thwart any restriction on their exploitation of resources. Capitalism cannot be managed without regulation, but the regulatees have become the

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The University of Tennessee Press
Knoxville 37916

Answers to the December puzzle.

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regulators, a sort of planning-in-reverse.

While marred by a kind of sophomoric slogan-think, this is on the whole a thought-provoking book. And it's hard to disagree with Harris that, "a system that has to be forced to weigh the value of underarm spray deodorants against the possible destruction of the earth's protective ozone layer, cannot be easily restructured in the interests of future survival."

–Leonard Reed

Dust of Life. Liz Thomas. Dutton, $8.95.

Eskimos, Chicanos, Indians. *(Vol. IV of* **Children of Crisis.**) Robert Coles. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $15.

Ethnic Chauvinism: The Reactionary Impulse. Orlando Patterson. Stein and Day, $15.

Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modern Culture. Peter Gay. Oxford, $12.95.

Grassroots. George McGovern. Random House, $12.50.

The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower. David Caute. Simon & Schuster, $12.95.

A Healthy State: An International Perspective on the Crisis in United States Medical Care. Victor W. Sidel, Ruth Sidel. Pantheon, $10.95.

Humanitarian Politics: The International Committee of the Red Cross. David P. Forsythe. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, $17.95.

Hunters, Seamen and Entrepreneurs: The Tuna Seinermen of San Diego. Michael K. Orbach. Univ. of California Press, $12.75.

Israeli Women: The Reality Behind the Myth. Lesley Hazleton. Simon & Schuster, $8.95.

It Takes a Long Time to Become Young. Garson Kanin. Doubleday, $6.95.

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The Last Cowboy. Jane Kramer. Harper & Row, $8.95.

The Limits of Health Reform. Eli Ginzberg. Basic Books, $10. Here is an essay about the health care crisis, written with the passion and poetry of an internal memo from a state department of motor vehicles.

Somewhere within this study, the reader finds references to the Medicaid mills, the $200,000-a-year "specialists," the inner city neighborhoods without physicians, Bernard Bergman's nursing homes, and other outposts of the health care industry.

But you'll find many sentences even more ponderous than this one on the next-to-last page: "These realities should suffice as a warning that, although health reforms under government aegis may prove constructive, there is little prospect that any reform, even one well designed and implemented, can meet the expectations of its proponents: to assure access for all, improve quality, contain costs, and establish a single level of care for all Americans."

So anaesthetic is Ginzberg's prose that, by the time I reached page 212, I was convinced that I'd read that sentence–or at least parts of it–several times earlier in the book.

Before reaching the conclusion that reform is virtually impossible, Dr. Ginzberg recommends stricter cost-controls by Blue Cross and the federal government, halting overbuilding by hospitals, and increasing the use of paramedics where physicians are used now. Joseph Califano, a special committee of the American Medical Association, and just about everyone connected with the health care system have offered essentially the same recommendations as Dr. Ginzberg.

For some unofficial facts about the health care crisis, read the prodigious output of the Health Policy Advisory Center (Health PAC), 17 Murray St., New York, N.Y. 10007. For a simple primer on what's wrong with the medical establishment, read *The Great American Medicine Show* by Spencer Klaw (Viking, 1977). For a way out of the health care mess, consider Rep. Ronald Dellums' plan to channel all government health care funds through a new National Health Care Service, consisting of publicly operated facilities and salaried staff (including doctors) and democratically controlled at the community level.

But, whatever your tastes in health policy, avoid *The Limits of Health Reform.* If you've read the literature of the health crisis, it says nothing new–and, if you are

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new to the subject, this book will put you to sleep.

–David Kusnet

The Literary Politicians. Mitchell S. Ross. Doubleday, $10.

The March of Time: 1935-1951. Raymond Fielding. Oxford, $14.95. We think of history as the unfolding of political events, what prime ministers or kings decree, with here and there a nod to a great flood or earthquake. The March of Time, as radio program and film newsreel dealt in *that* kind of history: what American past the age of 30 doesn't remember the "voice" sonorously proclaiming, "Time–marches on!" or the chilling, "This week, as it must to all men, death came to . . . . ?"

But the *story* of the March of Time is history of a different kind, a quintessential atom of the energy and fabric of America. Louis de Rochemont was the film genius who compromised his individual vision with no one, who once worked 86 hours in the cutting room without sleep and drove his staff nearly as hard–and who made it all go. Much of MOT's dramatic re-enactment was, by today's standards, phony: if de Rochemont wanted shots of a fishing boat in a storm, he hired people to rock the vessel by pulling on cables; at a time when, believe it or not, newsreel footage of Hitler was virtually non-existent in America because film-makers eschewed controversy, MOT came up with a celebrated shot of the dictator staring moodily into a fireplace–even though de Rochemont had to hire an actor for the impersonation. Pro-British, anti-fascist and interventionist long before America entered World War II, MOT provoked controversy and congressional investigation, but stood its ground and played a seminal role in the use of photo journalism as an influence on public opinion.

In time, as in an aging bureaucracy, MOT's vigor evaporated and in August, 1951, as it must to all institutions, death came, the demise hastened by unionization, the departure of de Rochemont, competition from television and the corporate timidity–also a fiber in America's fabric–of Time, Inc. Fielding has written a fine obituary.

–Leonard Reed

McGuffey and His Readers: Piety, Morality and Education in Nineteenth-Century America. John H. Westerhoff III. Abingdon, $9.95.

Nigger in the Window. Helen Jackson Lee. Doubleday, $7.95.

Of Crimes and Rights: The Penal Code Viewed As a Bill of Rights. MacKlin Fleming. Norton, $12.50.

On the Edge. Roy Doliner. Viking, $8.95.

On Your Own: Patient-Controlled Alternatives to the Mental Health System. Judi Chamberlin. Hawthorn, $9.95.

The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective. Walter La Feber. Oxford, $10.

The Physicists: The History of a Scientific Community in Modern America. Daniel J. Kevles. Knopf, $15.95.

The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-45. Allan M. Winkler. Yale University Press, $11.95. "Oh, God," playwright Robert Sherwood confided to his diary in 1938, as the Nazis swallowed Austria, "How I hope to live to see the day when those barbaric bastards get their punishment." At about the same time, poet Archibald MacLeish was defining fascism as "a revolt of stunted, half-formed, darkened men against the human world of reason and intelligence and sense." A few years later, these two, their passionate idealism kept somewhat in check by the down-to-earth midwestern liberalism of Elmer Davis, struggled to shape the role of propaganda in a wartime democracy, knowing only what they didn't want: they wanted no part of the ruthless methods, however successful, of Joseph Goebbels (See *The War that Hitler Won*, below).

From its inception, the Office of War Information had problems. Its domestic operation was an early casualty, a victim of the American public's reluctance to be propagandized, however genteely, by its government.

In its overseas operation–correspondents and the Voice of America–OWI's insistence on straight and prompt reporting ran afoul of the military's reluctance to reveal losses, a conflict that gradually eased as the American fortunes improved. (Said Elmer Davis wryly: "There is no temptation to hold back bad news when there is no bad news to hold back.")

The most serious conflict, however, was between the propagandists' dedication to America's proclaimed war goals and the compromises the political leaders had to

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make in the interest of shortening the war. OWI *believed* in FDR's "Four Freedoms;" FDR believed in them, sort of, but not for places like India where they might incite the Indians against the British. When Mussolini fell, the uncompromisingly anti-fascist OWI spoke disparagingly of the military rightist Victor Emmanuel III replaced him with and broadcast an allusion to the monarch himself as "the moronic little king." As it happened, FDR had decided to negotiate with the king.

The ensuing rhubarb jolted the OWI out of its ideological crusade and redirected its creative energies to the more limited goal of military victory. In "psychological warfare" closely coordinated with military operations, OWI made its greatest contribution.

The first large-scale application of psychological warfare began when OWI personnel, under military command, participated in the landings in North Africa. As the campaign moved inland, they took over newspaper plants, radio stations and movie theaters and used them all to erode the enemy's will to resist. The military didn't immediately enthuse to such notions as using its planes to drop leaflets on the enemy ("I'm not here to write 'em letters," said General Patton, "I'm here to kill the S.O.B.s."), but as deserters carrying leaflets began arriving at Allied lines Army officers became believers. Between D-Day and V-E Day, more than three billion leaflets were dropped. Although the Germans had decreed the death penalty for possession of Allied materials, 40 per cent of the German prisoners in Normandy had leaflets with them when they surrendered.

—Leonard Reed

Privileged Ones: The Well-Off and the Rich in America. *(Vol. V of* **Children of Crisis.)** Robert Coles. Atlantic-Little, Brown, $15.

The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism. Barbara J. Berg. Oxford, $14.95.

Remote Control: Television and the Manipulation of American Life. Frank Mankiewicz, Joel E. Swerdlow. Times, $15.

Risking: How to Take Chances and Win. David Viscott, M.D. Simon & Schuster, $7.95.

The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880-1930. Thomas Lee Philpott. Oxford, $17.95.

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The Thin Edge: Coast and Man in Crisis. Anne W. Simon. Harper & Row, $10.

Understanding Human Nature. James K. Feibleman. Horizon, $8.95.

The Ungovernable City. Douglas Yates. MIT, $15.00.

The War That Hitler Won: The Most Infamous Propaganda Campaign in History. Robert Edwin Herzstein. Putnam. $15.00.

When I was living in Munich during the early sixties, I had a daily conversation with my German tutor, Frau Kuhne, a woman who frequently expressed the repugnance she felt for Hitler and all he had stood for. One morning, thinking to bolster her pride, I spoke of the German resistance movement which culminated in the nearly successful attempt of the generals to assassinate Hitler. To my surprise, Frau Kuhne reacted with indignation. "They were traitors," she said.

The War that Hitler Won goes a long way toward explaining the confusion and ambiguity with which, decades after the debacle, many Germans regard that era. Herzstein's canvas is the protean campaign of saturation propaganda to which the German population was subjected by the warped genius of Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Enlightenment and Propaganda. "Propaganda," said Goebbels, "has but one goal . . . the conquest of the masses."

Unlike its American counterpart (The Office of War Information despaired as Hollywood trivialized the war with films like *Blondie for Victory* and *Air Raid Wardens*), the German propaganda machine controlled every instrument capable of molding opinion. "In 1943, a typical German civilian might awaken to radio propaganda, look at a calendar covered with the same slogans, have lunch after reading a menu covered with propagandistic phraseology, then board a train covered with posters and placards. When he reached his destination, he might hear a loudspeaker blaring forth the Wehrmacht report of the day while he peered through store windows at display posters."

An incident illustrates the thoroughness of Goebbels' supervision. Radio programs were frequently interrupted by "special announcements" of victories. The announcements were preceded by a blast of trumpets and heroic music and were concluded with a stirring marching song. When an illustrated weekly published a picture of the recording which contained the fanfare Goebbels was furious—he wanted the radio listener to envision the trumpets and marching armies, not a wax disc—and threatened the editor with concentration camp.

Intuitively attuned to striking the most responsive chords in the German people, with their uniquely mystic traditions, Goebbels used the tools of propaganda with an assiduity born of fanatical dedication. The schools could close for lack of heating fuel—but Goebbels kept open the movie theaters, potent centers of indoctrination.

But his knowledge of the German psyche was married to ignorance of the British and American character. He was convinced that the V-1 rockets would turn the British working class against its government. All through the war Goebbels believed the West would compromise with Germany to form a united front against the Russians (As late as April 22, 1945, he excitedly reported to Hitler that the Allies were joining the Nazis to halt the Russians' westward advance; nine days later, Hitler and Goebbels were dead). Except for the blitzkrieg period, when the propaganda of German invincibility unnerved the weak of heart, there is little indication that German propaganda abroad was any match for the counterpart efforts of British and American propaganda; *that* certainly was not a war that Hitler won.

And even in Germany itself, the underground dissemination of "illegal" information and anti-regime literature which continued until the end testifies to the fact that Goebbels' "conquest of the masses" was never complete.

Its title may be an overstatement. The book itself is a compelling documentation of an all-out assault on the mind of man.

Propaganda is misunderstood equally by critics who regard it as impotent and proponents who see it as an irresistible force. It is neither. The rush of events can be influenced only marginally by the rush of words. In crisis situations, however, that margin may be important, even decisive. The almost simultaneous publication of two excellent books that intelligently evaluate, respectively, American and German wartime propaganda is a happy coincidence.

—Leonard Reed

Who Cares for the Baby? Beatrice Marden Glickman, Nesha Bass Springer. Schocken, $9.95.

A Woman's Choice: The New Dimensions in Abortion. Samuel J. Barr, M.D., with Dan Abelow. Atheneum, $9.95.

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